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ABSTRACT

These books offer primary source readings focusing on issues of identity and personality in the Middle East. Individual sections of the books examine a particular issue in personality development through the perspectives of Islamic religion and cultural tradition. The issues of identity include: (1) "Religion"; (2) "Community"; (3) "Ethnicity"; (4) "Nationalism"; and (5) "Gender." Unique to the teacher's guide are three essays that provide additional background information: (1) "Thinking about Identity" (Lila Abu Lughod); (2) "Muhammad, the Qur'an and Muslim Identity" (Frank E. Peters); and (3) "Identity and the Literacy Context" (Mona N. Mikhail). Insights and strategies are offered in the teacher's guide to accompany the student readings. Appended materials in the teacher's guide include: a student worksheet on religion, eight teacher readings, and 26 references. The student reader contains maps of the Muslim world. (EH)

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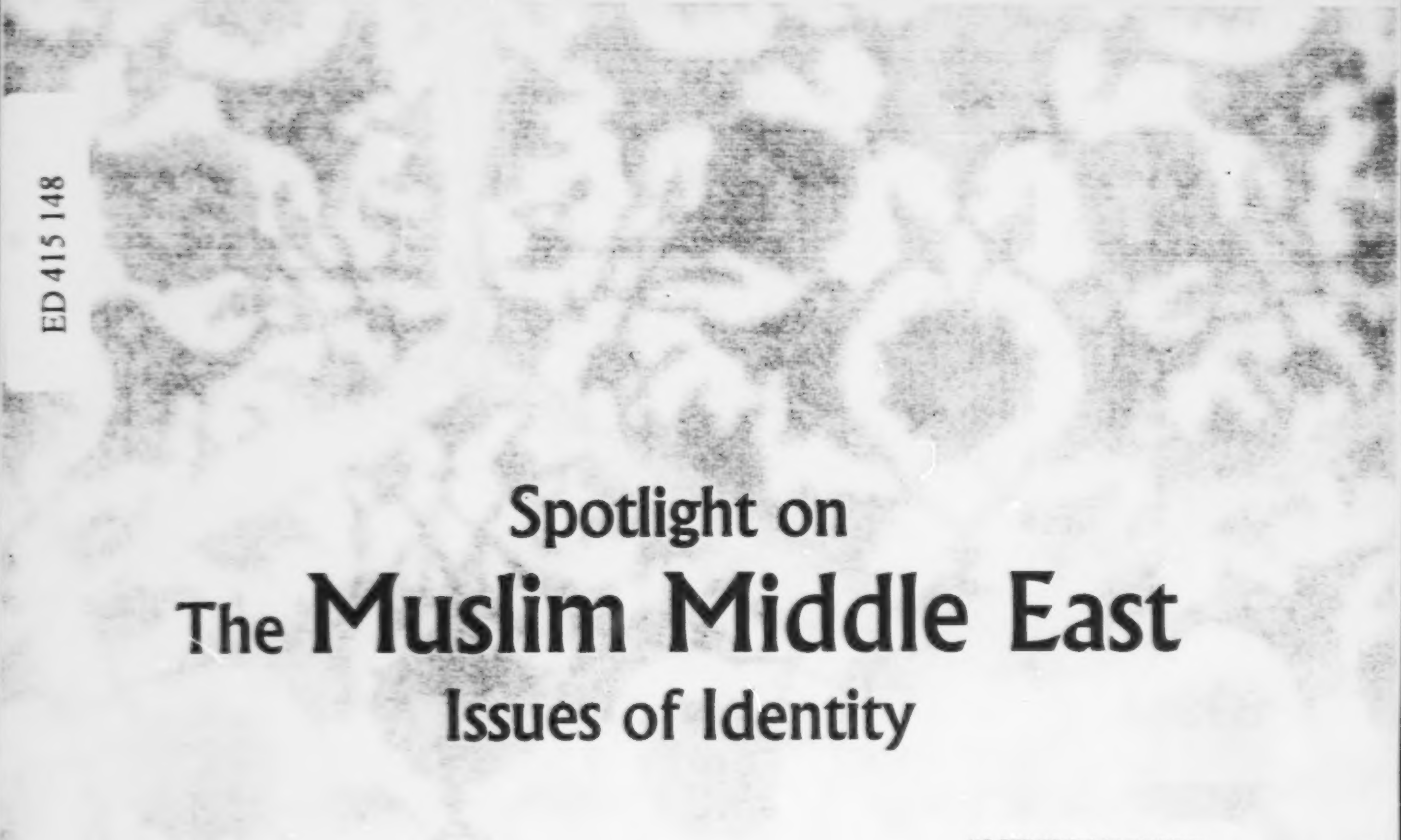

Spotlight on
The Muslim Middle East
Issues of Identity

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A Student Reader

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Spotlight on
The Muslim Middle East
Issues of Identity

A Student Reader

Edited by
Hazel Sara Greenberg
and Liz Mahony

a publication of
The American Forum for Global Education

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Spotlight on The Muslim Middle East: Issues of Identity
A Student Reader (secondary school level)

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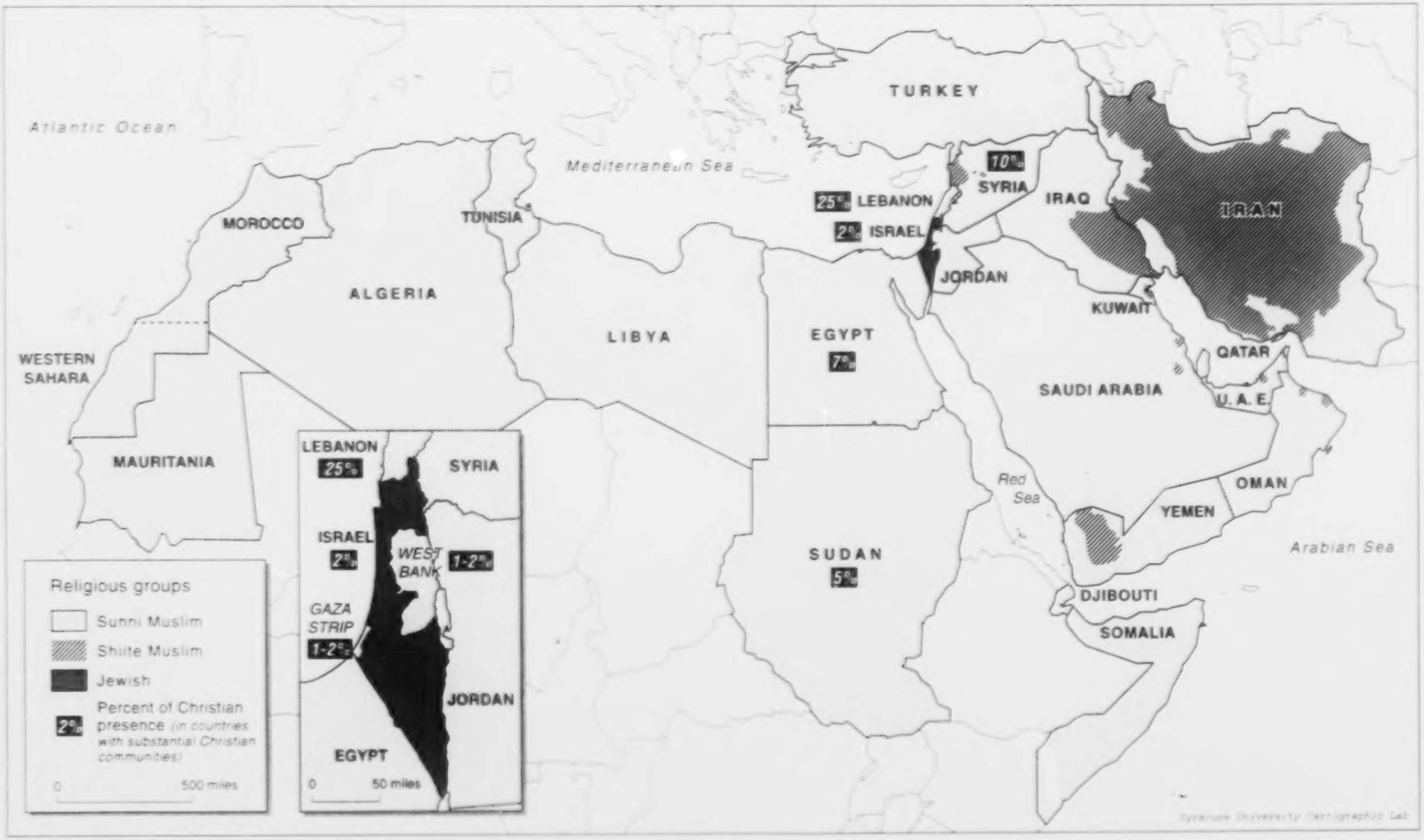
Map 1: Religious Groups


Atlantic Ocean
Mediterranean Sea
TURKEY
10%
SYRIA
25%
LEBANON
2%
ISRAEL
IRAQ
IRAN
MOROCCO
TUNISIA
ALGERIA
JORDAN
KUWAIT
LIBYA
EGYPT
7%
QATAR
WESTERN SAHARA
SAUDI ARABIA
U. A. E.
MAURITANIA
Red Sea
OMAN
YEMEN
SUDAN
5%
Arabian Sea
DJIBOUTI
SOMALIA
LEBANON
25%
SYRIA
ISRAEL
2%
WEST BANK
1-2%
GAZA STRIP
1-2%
JORDAN
EGYPT
0
50 miles
Religious groups
Sunni Muslim
Shiite Muslim
Jewish
2% Percent of Christian presence (in countries with substantial Christian communities)
0
500 miles
Syracuse University Cartographic Lab

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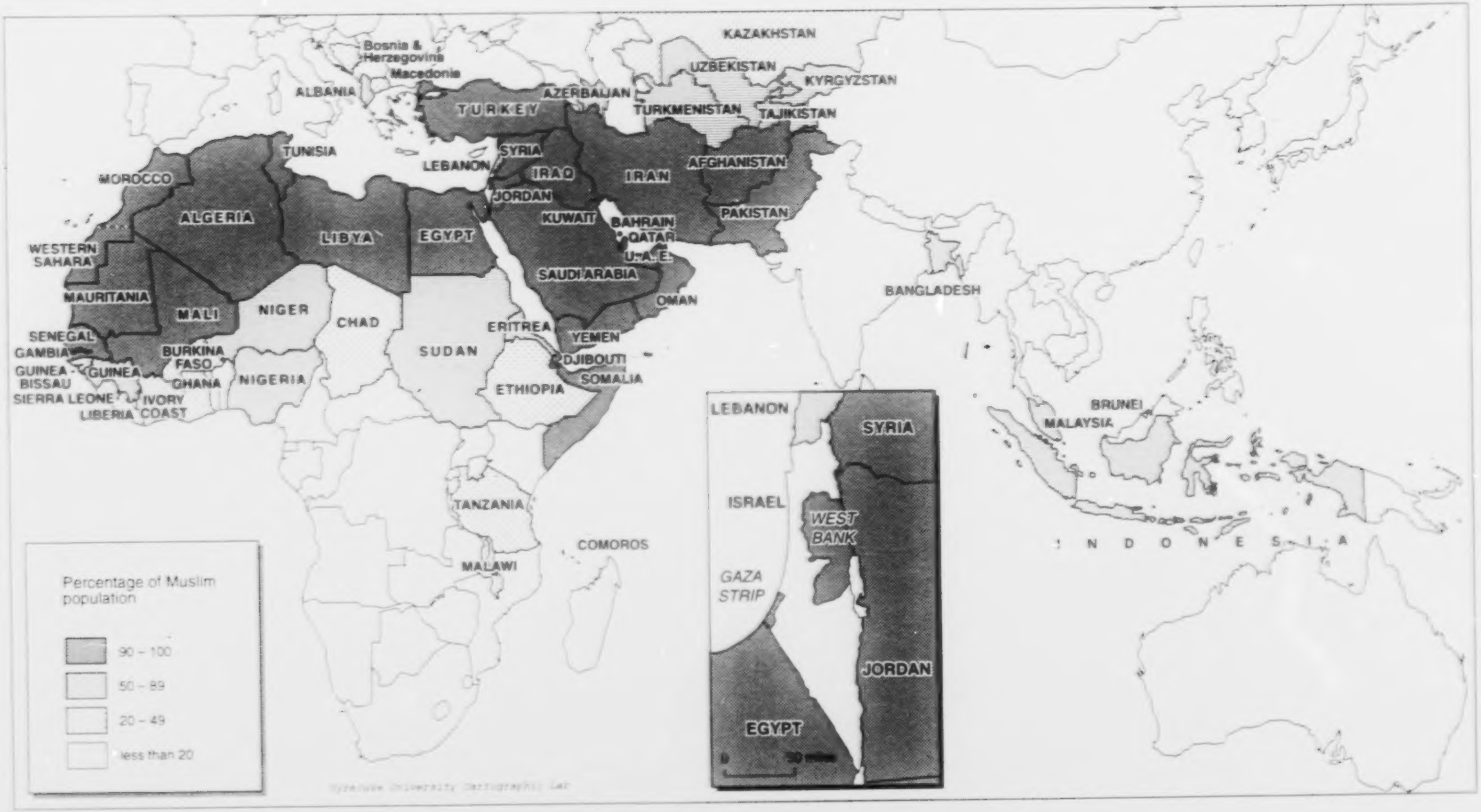
Map 2: Percentage of Muslim Population


KAZAKHSTAN
Bosnia & Herzegovina
Macedonia
UZBEKISTAN
KYRGYZSTAN
ALBANIA
AZERBAIJAN
TURKEY
TURKMENISTAN
TAJIKISTAN
TUNISIA
SYRIA
LEBANON
IRAQ
IRAN
AFGHANISTAN
MOROCCO
JORDAN
ALGERIA
KUWAIT
PAKISTAN
BAHRAIN
QATAR
LIBYA
EGYPT
WESTERN SAHARA
U.A.E.
SAUDI ARABIA
BANGLADESH
MAURITANIA
OMAN
NIGER
MALI
CHAD
SENEGAL
ERITREA
YEMEN
GAMBIA
BURKINA FASO
SUDAN
DJIBOUTI
GUINEA-BISSAU
GUINEA
GHANA
NIGERIA
SOMALIA
SIERRA LEONE
IVORY COAST
ETHIOPIA
LIBERIA
BRUNEI
MALAYSIA
TANZANIA
COMOROS
INDONESIA
MALAWI
Percentage of Muslim population
90 – 100
50 – 89
20 – 49
less than 20
Syracuse University Cartographic Lab
LEBANON
SYRIA
ISRAEL
WEST BANK
GAZA STRIP
JORDAN
EGYPT
0
30 miles

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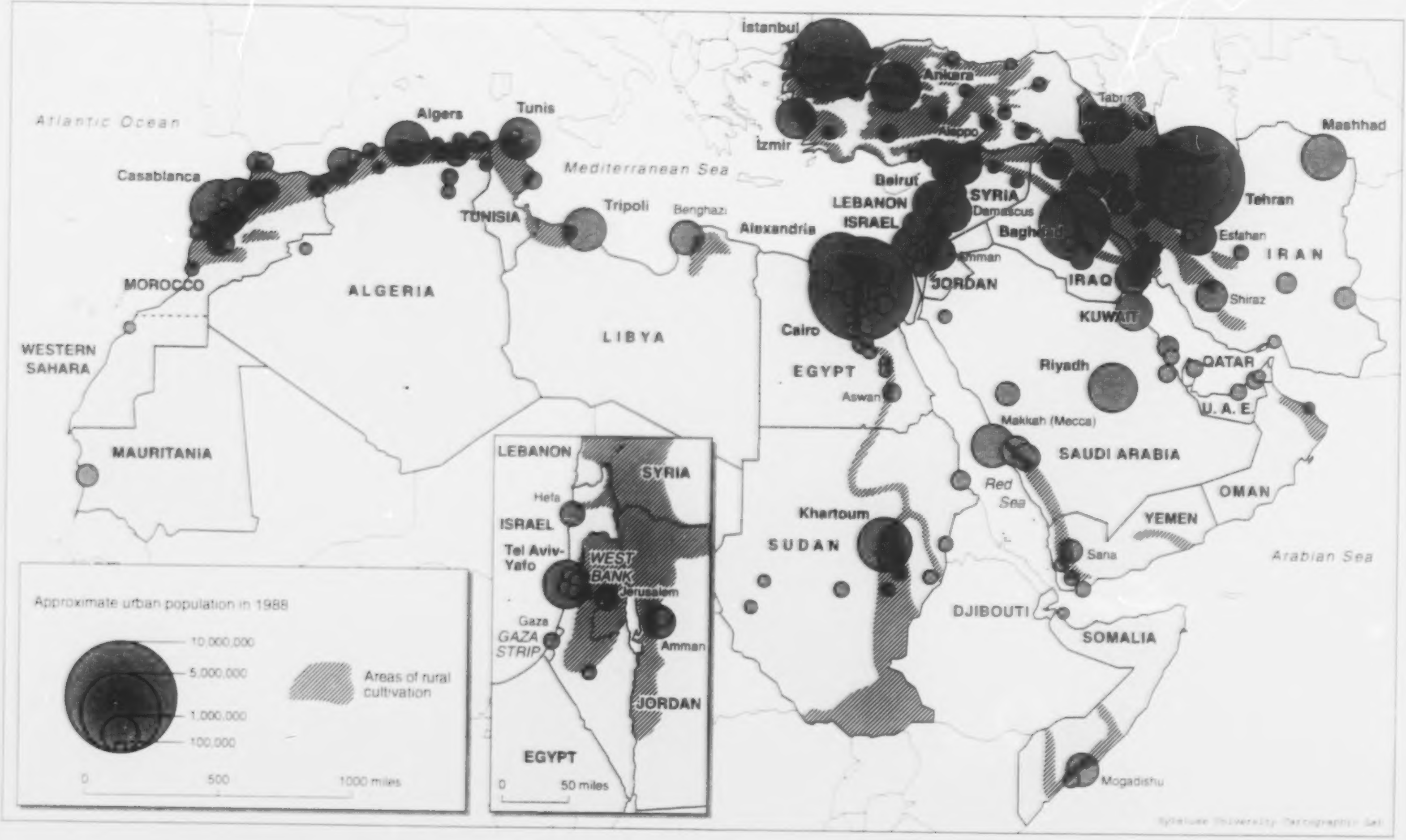
Map 3: Approximate Urban Population in 1988


Atlantic Ocean
Casablanca
Algers
Tunis
Mediterranean Sea
TUNISIA
Tripoli
Benghazi
Alexandria
İstanbul
Ankara
İzmir
Aleppo
Tabriz
Mashhad
Beirut
LEBANON
ISRAEL
SYRIA
Damascus
Baghdad
Tehran
Esfahan
IRAN
Amman
JORDAN
IRAQ
Shiraz
KUWAIT
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
LIBYA
Cairo
EGYPT
Aswan
Riyadh
QATAR
U. A. E.
WESTERN SAHARA
MAURITANIA
Makkah (Mecca)
SAUDI ARABIA
Red Sea
OMAN
YEMEN
Khartoum
SUDAN
Sana
Arabian Sea
DJIBOUTI
SOMALIA
Mogadishu
LEBANON
SYRIA
Hefa
ISRAEL
Tel Aviv-Yafo
WEST BANK
Jerusalem
Gaza
GAZA STRIP
Amman
JORDAN
EGYPT
0
50 miles
Approximate urban population in 1988
10,000,000
5,000,000
1,000,000
100,000
Areas of rural cultivation
0
500
1000 miles

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An Issue of Identity
Religion

Muhammad and the Beginnings of Islam

(Frank.E. Peters, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Languages and Literatures, New York University, 1995. Reprinted by permission.)

Islam is an Arabic word meaning "submission," and, more particularly, "submission to God." So a *muslim*—another form of the same word—is "someone who has submitted to God." Who is this God who is being "submitted to" as the Creator and Lord of the Universe, and who was it who introduced this simple idea that has won the hearts and minds of so many hundreds of millions of people around the globe?

The answer to the first question is simple. It is Allah. This word is also Arabic and it means no more than "The God." Allah is in fact the same unique and absolute God worshipped by the Jews and Christians as Yahweh or God the Father. All three of the great monotheistic faiths worship one and the same God.

Why, then, aren't Muslims just Jews and Christians? That brings us to the answer to the second question: who introduced this idea? The answer in one word is *Muhammad*, a man who was born and lived in western Arabia—what is now part of Saudi Arabia—from about 570 A.D. to 632 A.D. It was he who announced the new message of Islam and it is he who may be justly regarded as the founder of the community of Muslims.[1]

According to the traditional accounts of the life of Muhammad, he was born at Mecca sometime around 570 A.D. Mecca at the time was a regional commercial town—most of its trade was probably with the bedouin or desert Arabs who came there to barter with the town people. But something else drew the bedouin into Mecca. The town possessed a famous shrine called the Ka'ba, another Arabic word meaning "cube," for that was the shape of the building. It was here that Allah or "The God" of Mecca was worshipped. But not Allah alone. Scattered around the holy space that surrounded the Ka'ba were the idols of many other gods—Allah had no idol—since the Meccans had early on realized the attraction of these gods and goddesses and the commercial value of having the desert and other town Arabs come to Mecca and its neighborhood to worship them.

This was the Mecca into which Muhammad was born, a place where religion and commerce were closely tied together in the annual fairs and pilgrimages that occurred yearly in and around Mecca. There was money to be made there, but Muhammad did not have much of an opportunity to join in the commerce of the enterprising Meccans since he was orphaned while still a young boy, and in a town and a society where connections meant everything, he was raised first by his grandfather and then by his uncle.

Muhammad's fortunes appear to have changed when he married Khadija, a woman of some means in the society, and he began to play a part in her commercial ventures. This is almost all we know of Muhammad until, as a mature adult, he had a most unusual experience while alone in prayer on a mountain near Mecca. The accounts of this event are somewhat confused, but he thought he heard voices, or more precisely, a supernatural voice bidding him to "recite." Muhammad was dazed and confused, but his wife, to whom he repeated the incident, slowly restored his confidence, and a relative who was knowledgeable in the scriptures of the Jews and Christians assured him he had experienced what Moses had: the voice from on high was that of God—or, as later identified, Gabriel, God's angelic messenger—and the command to "recite" was the prologue to a new revelation of God to mankind.

Muhammad did indeed begin to "recite" and the result is the Qur'an, or "The Recitation," the collection of Muhammad's public utterances between 610 A.D. and his death in 632 A.D. For Muhammad, and so for Muslims, these are nothing less than the words of God, delivered to Muhammad and repeated word for word by him to all who cared to listen. At first there were few who cared to listen. Muhammad's wife became a believer—a muslim—also his cousin Ali and a small number of others. The rest of the Meccans were indifferent and then, as the message began to penetrate, their indifference turned to opposition, in the end a fierce opposition that did not hesitate to plot the death of Mecca's new preacher.

The message of the Qur'an was both old and new, but for the Meccans it meant a change in their ways. It was not the notion of submission to Allah that disturbed them—they already worshipped Allah as the chief god of Mecca—but the realization that "submission" meant the *exclusive worship of The God*. The other gods and goddesses whose idols filled the Meccan sanctuary were mere names, Muhammad announced, beings without power, without reality. The powerful at Mecca at first tried an economic and social boycott of Muhammad and his still small number of followers, but when this failed, their thoughts turned to assassination.

Muhammad's life—and the future of Islam—was saved from a somewhat unexpected quarter. Some people of Medina had come to Mecca on pilgrimage, had heard Muhammad's preaching, and their hearts had been touched. As the crisis mounted in Mecca, they invited him and his followers to come and settle in Medina. Muhammad accepted the invitation, and in the year 622 A.D., after twelve years of preaching in Mecca, he and his people stealthily migrated to Medina, 275 miles north of Mecca. This "migration," or *hijra* in Arabic, was later accounted a pivotal event in the history of Islam and so was used to mark the beginning of the Muslim Era. Just as the Jews date their history from the Creation of the World, and Christians from the birth of Jesus, so Muslims account 622 A.D. (Anno Domini) as 1 A.H. (Anno Hegirae - year of migration).

---

[1] Abraham was the first muslim, the Qur'an assures us, because he was the first to denounce (turn away from) idolatry and embrace the worship of the One True God. But he was not given a Book in the sense Moses and Jesus were, and so he did not found a community. "Muslim" as a notion is introduced by Abraham, but "Islam" as a community, a "People of the Book," is Muhammad's work.

Medina was a far different place from Mecca. It was not a religious or a commercial center but an oasis settlement where underground water made agriculture possible, in this case, the cultivation of the date-palm. It was governed by two major pagan Arab tribes, who had earlier wrested control of the oasis from the Jews in Arab tribes who lived there—as far as we know there were no indigenous Jews or Christians at Mecca—but were now, in 622 A.D. locked in a destructive civil war. Muhammad was invited to Medina not because all the Medinese thought he was the Prophet of God but in the hope that this charismatic holy man might be able to arbitrate between the town's warring Arab factions and their Jewish allies. So he came to Medina, set up a residence and an adjoining prayer-hall (mosque), where the faithful could assemble each Friday for community prayer and exhortation from Muhammad himself.

Muhammad, it must have been clear, was not just a preacher urging men and women to monotheism. The Qur'an has a great deal to say about prophets, of whom Muhammad proclaimed himself one. As in the Bible, a prophet is someone sent by God (Allah) with a message to mankind, usually to reform. And, as the Qur'an also points out, when men refuse the prophets' messages, they are invariably punished. But some prophets have a special mission: they have been given a Sacred Book and are the founders of religious communities. Such as Moses, who brought the Torah and thus became the founder of the Jews. Such too was Jesus, who brought the Gospel and founded the community of Christians. Each of these communities was part of Allah's saving plan for humanity, but each failed in turn, neglecting or misunderstanding God's message. Thus God had once again—and for the last time—sent a Messenger, Muhammad, with a Book, the Qur'an, to found the community of Muslims. Islam, then is God's appointed successor to the authentic but failed communities we call Judaism and Christianity.[2]

Muhammad may have expected the Jews of Medina to accept this view of history, but they did not. He took the rejection hard, and in the end, as his power grew, the Jews were removed from Medina. As for the Medina civil war, Muhammad ignored it. Instead he turned against Mecca, and in 624 A.D., at a place called Badr Wells, he and his followers captured and looted a Meccan commercial caravan. It was a stunning and surprising victory and made the Medinese take their new leader far more seriously as both a political and religious force. The Meccans tried to counter but their attempts failed and slowly their morale drained away. Muhammad, meanwhile, became the undisputed master of Medina, and the revelations in the later part of the Qur'an are no longer exhortations (urgings) to convert but God's religious instructions through his Prophet—on prayer, for example, and fasting—to his increasingly powerful community of Muslims.

Nor was Islam's reach restricted to Medina. Annually Muhammad sent forth military expeditions against nearby oases. If the inhabitants were pagans, they had no choice but to accept Islam—there is as little tolerance in Islam for idolaters as there is in Judaism or Christianity—but if they were Jews or Christians, they were guaranteed their freedom to worship as before, though they had to accept Islamic sovereignty, signified by the payment of an annual tax. Mecca's own days were obviously numbered, and in 630 A.D. Muhammad reentered his native city with scarcely any resistance, purged the Ka'ba sanctuary of its idols, and quickly returned to Medina. Though Mecca was, and is, the holiest city in Islam, towards whose Ka'ba each Muslim prays and to which each Muslim is required to make a pilgrimage (*hajj*) at least once in his or her life, Muhammad preferred to continue living at Medina and visited the holy city only one other time, to make his first and only Hajj as a Muslim in 632.

632 was also the year of the Prophet's death. It was unexpected in that he seemed in vigorous good health and seems to have followed a fever of some sort. He died in his own home in Medina in the arms of Aisha, one of his favorite wives. Some at first refused to believe he was dead, but soon the reality set in: Muhammad was, after all, a mere mortal, as the Qur'an itself often insisted, and now he was dead. His remains were interred (placed) in the room where he died and his tomb in Medina, now much enhanced and adored, is still visited by millions to this day.

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[2] Jews and Christians constitute authentic communities in that they received a genuine Scripture, but they are "failed" communities - why else would God send another Messenger? - because (1) they failed to live according to those Scriptures and (2) they tampered with the texts of those Scriptures.

Readings from the Qur'an

(We are grateful to Mr. Orooj Ahmed Ali for allowing us to reprint the following from Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation, by Ahmed Ali, Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 12, 24-7, 34-5, 93, 100, 103-4, 145-6, 165, 319, 352, 371, 471, 482, 559, © All Rights Reserved.)

Creation

Surah 32: 4-9

The reader of the Qur'an will find many things familiar from the Bible:

4. It is God who created the heavens and the earth
and all that lies between them,
in six spans, then assumed all authority.
You have no protector other than Him,
nor any intercessor.
Will you not be warned even then?
5. He regulates all affairs from high to low, then they rise
to perfection step by step in a (heavenly) day
whose measure is a thousand years of your reckoning.
6. Such is (He) the knower of the unknown and the known,
the mighty and the merciful,
7. Who made all things He created excellent;
and first fashioned man from clay,
8. Then made his offspring from the extract of base fluid,
9. Then proportioned and breathed into him His spirit,
and gave you the senses of hearing, sight and feeling.
And yet how little are the thanks you offer!

The Religion of Abraham

Surah 2: 127-135

Islam, the Qur'an asserts, is nothing but the "religion of Abraham," the biblical patriarch who was the first "submitter" (muslim) to the One True God:

127. And Abraham...prayed: "Accept this from us, O Lord,
for You hear and know everything;
128. And make us submit, O Lord, to Your will,
and make our progeny a people submissive to You.
Teach us the way of worship
and forgive our trespasses,
for You are compassionate and merciful;
129. And send to them, O Lord, an apostle from among them
to impart Your messages to them,
and teach them the Book and the wisdom,
and correct them in every way;
for indeed You are mighty and wise."
130. Who will turn away from the creed of Abraham
but one dull of soul?
We made him the chosen one here in the world,
and one of the best in the world to come,
131. (For) when his Lord said to him, "Obey," he replied:
"I submit *(aslamtu)* to the Lord of all the worlds."
132. And Abraham left this legacy to his sons,
and to Jacob, and said:
"O my sons, God has chosen this as the faith for you.
Do not die but as those who have submitted to God (*muslimun*)."
133. Were you present at the hour of Jacob's death?
"What will you worship after me?"
he asked his sons, and they answered:
"We shall worship your God and the God of your fathers,
of Abraham and Ismael and Isaac,
the one and only God,
and to Him we submit."
134. Those were the people, and they have passed away.
Theirs the reward for what they did,
and yours will be for what you do.
You will not be questioned about their deeds.
135. They say: "Become Jews or become Christians,
and find the right way."
Say: "No, we follow the way of Abraham,
the upright, who was not an idolater."

The Death of Jesus

Surah 4: 157

One thing that separates Christians from Muslims is the Qur'an's account of the apparent death of Jesus:

157. And (the Jews were punished) for saying:
"We killed the Christ, Jesus, son of Mary,
who was an apostle (messenger) of God;"
but they neither killed nor crucified him,
though it so appeared to them.
Those who disagree in the matter
are only lost in doubt. They have no knowledge about it
other than conjecture,
for surely they did not kill him.

A History of Revelation

Surah 5: 44,46,48

Muhammad is part, although the last and crowning part, of a continuing history of God's revelations to humankind. It is once again God who is speaking:

44. We sent down the Torah which contains
guidance and light, in accordance with which
the prophets who were obedient (to God)
gave instructions to the Jews, as did
the rabbis and priests, for they were
the custodians and witnesses of God's writ.
46. Later in the train (of the prophets),
We sent Jesus, son of Mary, confirming the Torah
which had been (sent down) before him,

and gave him the Gospel containing guidance and light
which corroborated the earlier Torah,
a guidance and warning for those who
preserve themselves from evil and follow the straight path.
48. And to you We have revealed
the Book containing the truth,
confirming the earlier revelations,
and preserving them from (change and corruption).

Jesus Predicts the Coming of Muhammad

Surah 61: 6

6. And when Jesus, son of Mary said:
"O children of Israel, I am sent to you by God
to confirm the Torah (sent) before me,
and to give you good tidings of an apostle (Messenger)
who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad (the praised one)."
Yet, when he has come to them with clear proofs
they say: "This is only magic."

Muhammad's Mission

Surah 9: 33

33. It is He who sent His Messenger
with guidance and the true faith
in order to make it superior to other systems of belief,
even though the idolaters may not like it.

The "People of the Book" are those, like the Jews and Christians, who have already been given a Scripture.

Surah 5: 15-16

15. O People of the Book,
Our Apostle (Messenger) has come to you, announcing
many things of the Scripture that you have suppressed,
passing over some others.
To you has come light and a clear Book from God
16. Through which God will lead those
who follow His pleasure
to the path of peace,
and guide them out of darkness into light by His will,
and to the path that is straight.

Surah 5: 19

19. O you People of the Book,
Our Apostle (Messenger) has come to you
when apostles had ceased to come long ago,
lest you said: "There did not come to us
any messenger of good news or of warnings."
So now there has reached you
a bearer of good tidings and of warnings;
for God has the power over all things.

The Qur'an

Surah 2: 2-5

2. This is The Book free of doubt and involution,
a guidance for those
who preserve themselves from evil
and follow the straight path,
3. Who believe in the Unknown
and fulfill their devotional obligations,
and spend in charity
of what We have given them;
4. Who believe
in what has been revealed to you
and what was revealed to those before you,
and are certain of the Hereafter.
5. They have found the guidance of their Lord
and will be successful.

Surah 26: 192-197

192. And this (Qur'an) is a revelation
from the Lord of all the worlds,
193. Which the trusted Spirit descended with
194. To (communicate) to your heart
that you may be a warner
195. In eloquent Arabic.
196. This is (indicated) in Books of earlier people.
197. Was it not a proof for them
that the learned men of Israel knew about this?

Surah 35: 31

31. What we have revealed to you in the Book is the truth,
and proves (what has been sent) before it to be true.

God's Message in the Qur'an

Surah 112: 1-4

1. Say: "HE is God
the one the most unique,
2. God the immanently indispensable.
3. He has begotten no one,
and is begotten of none.
4. There is no one comparable to Him."

Surah 57: 20

20. Know that the life of this world
is only a frolic and a mummery, an ornamentation,
boasting and bragging among yourselves,
and lust for multiplying wealth and children.
It is like rain so pleasing
to the cultivator for his vegetation

which sprouts and swells, and then begins to wither,
and you see it turn to yellow
and reduced to chaff.
There is severe punishment in the Hereafter,
but also forgiveness from God and acceptance.
As for the life of this world,
it is no more than merchandise of vanity.

People of the Book: Jews and Christians

Surah 2: 213

213. Men belonged to a single community,
and God sent them messengers,
to give them happy tidings and warnings
and sent the Book with them containing the truth
to judge between them in matters of dispute;
but only those who received it differed
after receiving clear proofs,
on account of waywardness
(and jealousies) among them.
Then God by His dispensation showed those who believed
the way to the truth about which they were differing;
for God shows whom He please
the path that is straight.

Islam is, on the testimony of the Qur'an itself, a successor community to those other peoples who had gone before it. They had had their Messengers and they too had been given the benefit of God's Book, as God Himself makes clear:

Surah 2: 87-88

87. Remember We gave Moses the Book
and sent after him many an apostle;
and to Jesus, son of Mary, We gave
clear evidence of the truth,
reinforcing him with divine grace.
Even so, when a messenger
brought to you what did not suit your mood
you turned haughty,
and called some imposters
and some others you slew.
88. And they say: "Our hearts are enfolded in covers."
In fact, God has cursed them for their unbelief;
and only a little do they believe.

Surah 2: 109-113

109. How many of the followers of the Books
having once known the truth
desire in their hearts, out of envy,
to turn you into infidels again
even after the truth has become clear to them!
But you forbear and overlook till God fulfil His plan;
and God has power over all things.
110. Fulfill your devotional obligations and pay the zaqat.
And what you send ahead of good
you will find with God,
for He sees all that you do.
111. And they say: "None will go to Paradise
but the Jews and the Christians;" but this
is only wishful thinking.
Say: "Bring the proof if you are truthful."
112. Only he who surrenders to God with all his heart
and also does good, will find his reward with his Lord,
and will have no fear or regret.
113. The Jews say, "The Christians are not right,"
and the Christians say, "The Jews are in the wrong;"
yet both read the Scriptures;
and this is what the unread
had said too. God alone
will judge between them in their differences
on the Day of Reckoning.

Surah 5: 44

Both the Jews and the Christians had been warned about lapsing into error:

44. We sent down the Torah which contains
guidance and light; in accordance with which
the prophets who were obedient (to God)
gave instructions to the Jews, as did
the rabbis and priests, for they were
the custodians and witnesses of God's writ.

Surah 4: 171

171. O People of the Book,
do not be fanatical in your faith,
and say nothing but the truth about God.
The Messiah who is Jesus, son of Mary,
was only an apostle of God, and a command of His
which He sent to Mary,
as a mercy from Him.
So believe in God and His apostles,
and do not call Him "Trinity."
Abstain from this for your own good;
for God is only one God,
and far from His glory is it
to beget a son...

Islam, God's Chosen People

Surah 3: 100

100. O believers, if you follow
what some of the People of the Book say,
it will turn you into unbelievers
even after you have come to belief.

Surah 3: 102-104

102. O believers, fear God as He should be feared,
and do not die except as those submitting (to Him).
103. Hold on firmly together to the rope of God,
and be not divided among yourselves, and remember
the favours God bestowed on you
when you were one another's foe
and He reconciled your hearts,
and you turned into brethren through His grace.
You had stood on the edge of a pit of fire
and He saved you from it, thus revealing
to you His clear signs,
that you may find the right way perchance.
104. So let there be a body (community) among you
who may call to the good,
enjoin what is esteemed
and forbid what is odious.
They are those who will be successful.

Surah 3: 108-110

108. These are the commandments of God
We recite to you verily;
God does not wish
injustice to the creatures of the world.
109. For to God belongs all
that is in the heavens and the earth,
and to God do all things return.
110. Of all the communities raised among men you are the
best, enjoining the good, forbidding the wrong,
and believing in God.
If the people of the Book
had come to believe it was best for them;
but only some believe, and transgressors are many.

Aggression in the Defense of Islam

Surah 2: 190-191

Islam was an activist faith, as the Prophet had demonstrated in both his words and deeds, and the theme of "striving on the path of God" runs throughout the Qur'an. In some instances the "striving" was a personal one against sin or toward perfection, and in others the context was social or communal, in short, as part of a "Holy War" in the quite literal sense of armed combat, what came to be called jihad.

190. Fight those in the way of God who fight you,
but do not be aggressive:
God does not like aggressors.
191. ...Oppression is worse than killing.

Qur'an as Spoken Word An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture

(William A. Graham, from "Approaches to Islamic Religious Studies", ed. by Richard Martin, Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1985, pp. 29, 30, 32, 40, 104-6, 108-9. Reprinted by permission.)

Muslim Scripture as Spoken Word

The Islamic tradition, in contrast to that of Jews and Christians, had a generic concept of scripture from its very beginnings. The Qur'an's own view is that there have been many scriptures, or *kutub* in the sense of sacred and authoritative divine relations, of which the Qur'an, or "Recitation," is the final and most complete.

The specific understanding of their own scripture is also different among Muslims from that among either Jews or Christians. While all three traditions stress the importance of scripture in worship, piety, devotion, and faith, the Qur'an stands more clearly alone as the primary focus of Muslim faith...the character of the Qur'an as the verbatim speech of God sets it apart...it is in the Qur'an that Muslims directly encounter God...

Finally, and most importantly, the primary and most authoritative form of the qur'anic text, unlike the biblical, is oral, not written. The very name of the Muslim scripture, "al-Qur'an," underscores this. It is derived from the root Q-R' with the basic meaning "to proclaim, recite, read aloud." The name "al-Qur'an carries the fundamental sense of "the Reciting" or "the Recitation," and it is indeed as a recited text above all that the Qur'an has played its major role in the piety and practice of Muslims.

First is the apparent degree to which the very name "Qur'an"... must originally have been understood by its earliest hearers to refer to oral scripture reading or recitation such as Jews and Christians practiced in the seventh-century.

A second argument for the originally oral-aural understanding of "qur'an" comes from the internal evidence of the qur'anic text itself. That the qur'anic revelations were meant to be proclaimed aloud is evident from the recurring imperative "*Qul!*" ("Say!"), which introduces well over three hundred different passages of the Qur'an, as well as the frequent occurrence of the verb *tala*, "to recite, follow," with similar reference to reading the text aloud... but to emphasize the written text as secondary. Indeed, the reciting of the Qur'an has always been basic to elementary education in every corner of the Muslim world.

Yet the active role of Qur'an as spoken word among Muslims is still (very) pervasive. From birth to death, virtually every action a Muslim makes, not to mention every solemn or festive event in his or her life, is potentially accompanied by spoken words of the Qur'an, whether these be entire recited passages or simply discrete qur'anic words or phrases that have passed into everyday usage.

None of the preceding is meant to belittle the importance of the written form of the Qur'an or any other of the great scriptural texts of human history. The Qur'an in particular has been written and is visible in magnificent fashion: its tradition of manuscript illumination and calligraphic artistry is one of the wonders of the Islamic cultural heritage. The written qur'anic word embellishes virtually every Muslim religious building as the prime form of decorative art.

The role of qur'anic recitation as the backbone of Muslim education, in its earliest as well as its most advanced stages...that Muslims need to be able, as early in life as possible, to recite from the Qur'an in its original form with some ease. This conviction is succinctly expressed in the tradition, ascribed to the Prophet himself, that says "it is a grievous mistake to take the written page as your *shaykh*."

Memorizing from the Qur'an has always been basic to bringing up children in every Muslim society, and there are few sounds more constant in diverse parts of the Islamic world, from Morocco to Indonesia, than the mesmerizing singsong chant of tiny children as they recite the Qur'an for their teacher in the neighborhood Qur'an school known commonly as *kuttah* or *maktab*. Even though only a small percentage of such children ever stay in school long enough (typically five to eight years) to memorize the whole Qur'an or become literate in Arabic, the learning of at least some part of the divine word by heart is the single most common early learning experience shared in some degree by all Muslims.

At higher levels of education, knowledge of the Qur'an is essential and presumed. The correct contextual application of its verses is an art that one develops only over time, and its technical interpretation is a science that must be learned through laborious study. Among religious scholars, the international language..is the classical qur'anic Arabic, which is the ideal standard of Arabic literacy.

All of this reflects something of the variety of the ways in which the Qur'an's vocal presence in the Muslim community is felt... From birth to death, virtually every action a Muslim makes, not to mention every solemn or festive event in his or her life, is potentially accompanied by spoken words of the Qur'an, whether these be entire recited passages or simply discrete qur'anic words or phrases that have passed into everyday usage. Such a qur'anic word may be the simple *basmalah*, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate" that precedes countless daily acts such as drinking or eating, just as it precedes all but one surah of the Qur'an. It may be the words of Surah 2:156, "Truly, we are God's and, truly, unto him we are returning," which are uttered as a statement of resignation to fate and recognition of God's power over and guidance of all earthly affairs. Alternatively, it may be the ubiquitous *ma sha llah* ("whatever God wills!") of Surah 18:39 and *al-hamdu lillah* ("Praise be to God!") of Sura 1, both of which punctuate Muslim speech even outside of the Arabic-speaking world, as do qur'anic expressions invoking God's mercy (*rahmah*) or forgiveness (*istighfar*).

Judaism, Christianity and Islam - The Classical Texts and Their Interpretation

("Vol. 2: The Word of the Law and the People of God", F.E. Peters, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 292-3. Reprinted by permission.)

The Qur'an, since it is the word of God, and since it obviously includes in its contents a great many prescriptions pertaining to conduct, was also the Law of God. There is no doubt that Muslims thought so from the beginning or that the Prophet's own extra-Qur'anic teaching and example counted heavily in the early community's efforts at living the life of the believer. That much we can assume; it fell to later Muslims, who lived within the long-established and fully defined version of that life, to explain to themselves just how that had come about. The first example comes from a lawyer, al-Shafi'i (d. 820 C.E.), who was himself involved in defining the Islamic law.

Shafi'i said: The sum total of what God declared to His creatures in His Book, by which He invited men to worship Him according to His prior decision, falls in various categories.

One such category is what He declared to His creatures textually (in the Qur'an), such as the aggregate of duties owed to him, namely, that they shall perform the prayer, pay the alms tax, perform the pilgrimage and observe the fast (of Ramadan); and likewise that He has forbidden disgraceful acts, in both public and private, such as the explicit prohibition of adultery, the drinking of wine, eating the flesh of dead things and blood and pork; and finally He has made clear to them how to perform the duty of ablution as well as other matters stated explicitly in the Qur'an.

The second category consists of those acts the obligation of which He established in His book but whose manner of performance He made clear by the discourse of His Prophet. The number of prayers (to be said each day), and the (amount) of the alms tax and their time (of fulfillment) are cases in point, but there are similar cases revealed in His Book.

A third category consists of what the Messenger of God established by his own example or exhortation, though there is no explicit rule on them defined by God (in the Qur'an). For God has laid down in His book the obligation of obedience to His Prophet and recourse to his decision. So he who accepts a duty on the authority of the Prophet of God accepts it by an obligation imposed by God.

The fourth category consists of what God commanded his creatures to seek through personal initiative (devoted to study of the Qur'an or the traditions of the Prophet) and by it put their obedience to the test exactly as He tried their obedience by the other duties which He ordered them to fulfill, for the Blessed and Most High said, "And we shall put you on trial in order to know those of you who strive and endure, and we will test your accounts" (Qur'an 47:33). (Shafi'i, *Treatise*) [Shafi'i 1961: 67-68]

The same process is described five and a half centuries later by Ibn Khaldun (d.1406 C.E.) now writing less as a lawyer than as a self-conscious historian.

The basic source *of legal evidence are the Book, that is, the Qur'an, and then the Prophetic traditions, which clarify the Qur'an.* At the time of the Prophet the laws were received directly from him. He possessed the Qur'anic revelation, and he explained it directly. No transmission, speculation or analogical reasoning was necessary. After the Prophet's death, direct explanation was no longer possible. The Qur'an was preserved through a general and continuous transmission. As for the Prophetic tradition, the men around Muhammad all agreed that it was necessary to act in accordance with whatever of it has reached us, as statement or practice, through a sound report that can be trusted to be truthful. It is in this sense that legal evidence is determined by the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition.

Then general consensus took its place next to them. The men around Muhammad agreed to disapprove of those who held opinions different from theirs. They would not have done that without some basis for doing so, because people like the men around Muhammad do not agree upon something without a valid reason. In addition, the evidence attests the infallibility of the whole group. *This, general consensus became a valid proof in legal matters.*

Then we look into the methods according to which the men around Muhammad and the early generations made their deductions from the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. It was found that they compare similar cases and drew conclusions from the analogy, in that they either all agreed or some of them made concessions in this connection to others. Many of the things that happened after the Prophet are not included (or are not covered) in the established texts. Therefore they compared and combined them with the established indications that they found in the texts, according to certain rules that governed their combinations. This assured the soundness of their comparison of two similar cases, so that it can be assumed that one and the same divine law covered both cases. This became another kind of legal evidence, because the early Muslims all agreed upon it. *This is analogy, the fourth kind of evidence.* (Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima 6.13*) [Ibn Khaldun 1967; 3:23-24]

Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East

(*Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East*, eds. by Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn A. Early, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993, pp.205-8. Reprinted by permission.)

Islam's first principle is belief in one God. Arabs at the rise of Islam professed different faiths: some were Christian and some were Jewish, but the majority were pagans who worshipped numerous gods. The revelations to Muhammad, the first prophet of Islam, stressed that there is but one God (in Arabic, *Allah*; literally, "the God".) God created human beings, the world, and all that it contains; he guided the earlier prophets (whose records are found also in the Jewish Torah and the Christian Scriptures); and revealed the Qur'an to furnish believers with principles to guide them on the proper path. The Qur'an, the Muslim scripture, is revered (adored) as God's word; it is a compilation of the 114 revelations given to Muhammad.

The worst sin a Muslim can commit is polytheism: to deny the unity of God or to attribute God's powers to any other being. The muezzin's (the one who calls the community to prayer) five-times daily call to prayer emphasizes the acknowledgement of God's supremacy as he calls, "God is the greatest. Come to prayer."

The Muslim *shahada*, or statement of belief, professes the belief in one God and in Muhammad as the prophet of God. Each Muslim repeats this creed to testify that God is one, that He was not born, neither can He give birth, nor can he be compared to any other creature. In Islam God is defined by ninety-nine attributes: omnipotent, omniscient, merciful, beneficent, and so on. Muslims recite these qualities as they work their way three times around their string of thirty-three prayer beads. Religious posters list the ninety-nine traits in elaborate calligraphy. Every document and meal and many other actions begin by invoking God's name—"In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful."

The second line of the *shahada* affirms Muhammad as the final prophet of Islam. God spoke to humans through his concern for people and his desire that they be led properly through the vicissitudes of life. If individuals follow God's commandments, they will be rewarded on Judgment Day. The Qur'an vividly describes the paradise of the believers and the hellfire of the wrongdoers.

God chose prophets to preach his laws to the people. Muhammad emerged as the leader of the Arab community and organized a community of believers...The Qur'an speaks of the *umma*, the community of believers which replaces all other types of community organization. Membership in the umma is based upon belief; all Muslims are equal in the umma whatever their birth, rank, nationality, or wealth.

The second major principle of Islam recognizes the need to follow a just social and economic order in the community. Muslims are expected to follow the moral order outlined in the Qur'an. This moral order defines membership in and responsibilities to the Muslim community, such as caring for the poor, the orphaned, and the needy. Islam established a social and economic order separated from religious duties, largely by instituting a system of Islamic law, the *shari'a* (literally), "path," or "way"). Islamic law is derived first from the Qur'an and second from the idealized example set by Muhammad and his early community. By following these sources of the law...which encompass such areas of life as worship, family relations, social codes, political regulations, commercial contracts, law of warfare, and community government, Muslims express their submission to God's will.

The Qur'an specifies as obligations for Muslims five religious practices which are thought to characterize the essence of faithful practice. These five pillars of Islam are (1) the creed, (2) prayer, (3) *zakat* (tithes)*, (4) fasting during the month of Ramadan, and (5) the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). Each religious duty speaks to two aspects of worship: the spiritual or transcendent side of Islam and the community-oriented practice which involves a communal experience... Muslims view Islam as both *din* (religion) and *dawla* (state). [Whether] Ablution for prayer or formulation of business contracts—all actions are defined by Islam. Thus Islam becomes a standard for society as well as a standard for worship.

A widely quoted *hadith* (saying) of Muhammad states that the community will divide into seventy-seven sects of which only one will be correct. While a variety of sectarian groupings have emerged over the centuries, the two major movements within Islam are the Sunni (*Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a*, The People of the Prophet's Sunna, or practice, and Community) and Shi'i (*Shi'at 'Ali*, Party of 'Ali). At Muhammad's death, the community divided over the basis of selecting the new head of the fledgling Muslim community. The Sunni position ultimately evolved into one of consultation among the community elders; the Shi'is claimed that 'Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law (husband of Muhammad's daughter Fatima and father of the Prophet's grandsons, Hassan and Hussein) should succeed Muhammad by virtue of blood ties. Over the years, political conflicts exaggerated differences between the groups. While the basic theology and jurisprudence of both groups are very close, there are some differences in their beliefs about community governance, derivation of juridical positions, ritual practice, and other subjects. Sunni Muslims, the majority (about 70 percent) of the World's Muslims, consider themselves the mainstream of Islam. Shi'i Muslims compose a majority of the population in Iran and Iraq and about 40 percent of that of Lebanon. There are also large numbers of Shi'i Muslims in parts of the Arabian Peninsula, Pakistan, and East Africa.

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* a required donation of a percentage of your income for religious purposes.

Family Law - The Rights and Obligations of Modern Muslim Women

(Mona N. Mikhail, *Images of Arab Women*, Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1979, pp. 15-21. Reprinted by permission.)

The following survey is brief and necessarily incomplete. Hopefully it has demonstrated, nevertheless, both the basically favorable approach to women's rights and the adaptability to changing social conditions which characterize Islamic law.

Islam defines woman's status as daughter, wife and mother and gives her personal and social rights, thus insuring her active participation in society. The rights and obligations of Muslim women as decreed by the Islamic *Shar'ia* Law have undergone varying degrees of interpretation according to the predominant school of law in any given time and place...

The Muslims of India, Southeast Asia, China and Japan, as well as those in Pakistan, adhere to the Hanafi School, one of the schools of thought. In Syria, Iraq, and until recently in Egypt, the Hanafi School formed the basis of family law. However, it is not uncommon practice to borrow from other sources of Islamic law, as differences are basically restricted in minor matters. Wherever Shi'ites dominate, as in Iran and parts of Iraq, the School of the "Twelver Shi'is" prevails. The essential question has been the adaptation of these ideas to the changing conditions of Muslim societies through the ages.

The Muslim woman's basic equality with man and her distinctive identity and personality are recognized in the Qur'an. The notion of equality and sharing is the true basis of family life in Islam:

O Mankind reverence
Your Guardian-Lord
Who created you
From a Single person;
Created of like nature
His mate, and from them twain
scattered [like seeds]
Countless men and women

The Arabic word for wife is *Zawj*, which applies equally to both spouses. Man and woman are thus partners who enjoy the same divine blessing and share the single God-given soul or self-woman is to man as a part is to the whole:

And among His signs
Is this, that He created
For you mates from yourselves
That he may
Dwell in tranquility with them and caused to exist
between you affection and compassion.

Ever since the turn of the century, legislators have attempted to bring about changes without violating the essence of Qur'anic rules or challenging the conservative 'ulama. Interpretations of certain *surahs* (chapters), particularly ones that speak of secular matters, have been convincingly incorporated in the legal systems of the modernizing societies. In virtually all Muslim countries today the law of evidence is governed not by the traditional rules of the Shari'a, but by legislation passed by the legislative branch of government. [This may not be as true in 1995 as it was in 1979.] Additionally, modern rules of evidence do not differentiate between witnesses on the basis of sex.

In fact, in almost all aspects of family, the traditional rules of Islamic law have been codified and modified by laws made by the governments of most Muslim countries since the turn of the century. The need was felt to provide a more easily accessible source of the rules of law. Traditionally the rules of Islamic law were to be sought in the writings of authoritative jurists and were not set forth in a single code. This was likely to lead to confusion, especially in view of the many schools of law and divergent opinions within each school. A first step in some countries, such as Egypt, was to direct the courts, by legislation, to apply only the prevailing opinion of the Hanafi school. Later, pieces of legislation were enacted to regulate such matters as marriage, divorce, custody of children and inheritance...These statutes provided, furthermore, a more orderly and readily accessible statement of the rules of family law.

Marriage

In Islam marriage is a consensual contract, not a sacrament. The marital bond results from the meeting of two identical statements of intent by the future spouses. The presence of two witnesses is also required. In traditional law this was intended both to ensure publicity for the marriage in the community and to provide evidence of its having been contracted in case of dispute. No written instrument was required. Modern legislation in most Muslim countries requires a written instrument drawn up by a competent official, a kind of notary public specializing in matrimonial matters. Testimonial evidence of marriage is not allowed. This was intended as a protection for women against unscrupulous husbands who would default in their obligations and then seek to defeat the wife's claim by simply denying the very existence of the marriage.

Traditionally, although both spouses were required to consent personally to the marriage, the father of a girl who was under age could contract marriage on her behalf in his capacity as her guardian. Such a marriage was not consummated before the wife came of age and she had the option of calling it off. Under modern legislation the requirement of a minimum age (16 years and up for the wife) halts the possibility of contracting any marriage without the future wife's consent.

The acknowledged purpose of marriage is to set up a new family and also to satisfy the sexual desires of both spouses. In Islam there is no sin attached to marital sex. The sexual drive of both man and woman is recognized as a fact and procreation does not need to be invoked as a redeeming value for the enjoyment of sex. Failure by the husband to fulfill his wife sexually is one of the grounds on which a wife can ask for a divorce and obtain it...the onus is on the husband and the wife assumes no obligation. The husband is solely responsible for household expenses and the maintenance of the children. The wife, even if she has considerable personal income, is not required to share in those responsibilities.

Whenever Islamic marriage is mentioned the issue of polygamy inevitably comes to mind. The Qur'anic regulation of polygamy was no doubt a progressive step in the historical context. At present socio-economic forces have reduced this practice to less than one percent of the population and polygamy can be said to be disappearing because none of the new generation is contemplating it as a desirable life style. One country (Tunisia) has prohibited it outright by legislation without, for that matter, admitting any deviation from the precepts of the Qur'an. The explanation is that the stringent conditions which had to be met in order to make polygamy permissible have become impossible to meet under existing circumstances. Since polygamy was conditional to begin with, it has ceased to be permissible because the conditions can no longer be satisfied.

Divorce

The marital bond can be dissolved by the husband through a unilateral declaration of his desire to do so. Such a declaration starts a three-month period within which married life can be resumed with no need to celebrate a new marriage. This, however, can happen only twice in the lifetime of any marriage. A husband who so divorces his wife for the third time is penalized by not being permitted to remarry her unless she has been subsequently widowed or divorced from another. Traditionally, a declaration of divorce by the husband was made verbally. Under the current legislation such a declaration has no effect unless made before a competent official who draws up a written instrument.

The wife does not have the privilege of ending the marriage by a unilateral declaration. She must ask the court for a divorce on grounds which she has to prove. There is a legal device, however, whereby the wife can acquire this privilege. By adding to the marriage contract a clause to the effect that the husband delegates this authority to his wife, the latter can effect a divorce herself, unilaterally and at will, supposedly exercising the husband's delegated authority acting on his behalf.

At least one Muslim country (Iran) has enacted a statute which considers such a clause implicit in *all* marriage contracts, so that all wives would have the same divorce rights as husbands. The same statute revives a Qur'anic requirement which had been abandoned in practice, namely that divorce must be preceded by an attempt at conciliation in which two arbiters, one of the family of each spouse, take part. Such takes place under the auspices of the court and the written instrument reflecting the divorce, declared by either spouse, must be accompanied by a certificate issued by the court to the effect that the attempt at reconciliation did not succeed. This brings Islamic divorce very close to the judicial divorce of other legal systems and achieves equality of the spouses without abandoning the classic position on the matter.

With respect to the custody of children the divorced Muslim wife is in a better position than her sisters in many other lands. She does not have to fight to keep her children. Custody automatically falls to the mother in respect of girls up to the age of twelve and of boys up to the age of nine. Only after the children are older can the father make a case for transferring custody to himself.

Inheritance

Islamic law regulates in minute detail the succession to the estate of a deceased person. The law designates the heirs and determines their respective shares. Nobody can make a will or a number of wills covering more than the third of all his assets and the beneficiaries of such wills cannot be among the heirs designated by law unless the other heirs agree. In principle, only an unrelated party can benefit by a will.

In connection with the condition of women, much has been said about the rule which gives an heiress one half of the share allotted to a male heir of the same category. This rule, however, should not be judged in isolation. The financial treatment of women in Islamic Law must be considered in a broader context. While a daughter receives only one half of what her brother gets in their father's estate, there are some rights favoring a daughter which should be considered. If married, a daughter does not have to contribute to the family expenses, no matter how rich she may be and, if single and in need, she has a right to make a claim for alimony against her brother. Or, if she has no brother, a woman has a claim against a whole group of male relatives designated by law as responsible for her maintenance. Non-Muslim women do not ordinarily possess such rights vis-à-vis their male relatives.

Modern legislation in such countries as Egypt, for example, has modified the rule on testamentary inheritance by removing the ban on making a will in favor of a legal heir. Now the available one third of the estate can be left to any beneficiary, even to a legal heir, with no need for agreement by the other heirs. Obviously, women stand to benefit by this innovation more than anybody else. Many are those who make wills in favor of their wives or daughters, thus supplementing their already legally allotted shares in the estate.

The Population Question Revisited

(Extractions from George Moffett, "The Wilson Quarterly," Summer, 1994, pp. 61. Reprinted by permission of the author.)

Catholicism is [not] the only religion buffeted by the contraceptive revolution. Millions of Muslims have responded by accenting a more permissive side of their theology. In the process they have removed one barrier to reducing fertility in the Muslim crescent of South Asia and the Arab world, where birthrates are among the highest in the world.

Just what is and what is not allowed under Muslim law is a matter of debate. Throughout the 1,400-year history of Islam, the world's second largest faith, children have been considered one of the greatest blessings of God. The religion's long tradition, based on the Prophet Muhammad's injunction to "marry and have children"—the Islamic equivalent of the enjoinder in Genesis to "go forth and multiply"—is one reason why large families have been the rule in Muslim nations.

But in the Muslim world...old teachings are bumping up against the hard realities of population trends that have fundamentally altered daily life. In Egypt, Mohammed Sayeed Tantawi, a government-appointed mufti, or interpreter of religious law, speaks with authority as keeper of the doctrine for the world's 850 million Sunni Moslems. "Islam provides no opposition to controlling birth. There is no Koranic verse which forbids family planning...if I were to have a meeting with the pope at the Vatican, I would explain to him that the Shari'a of Islam does not forbid family planning as long as the couple sees that there is a necessity for it."

...the logic of family planning extends even to the Shi'ite orthodoxy in Iran. When they seized control from the shah in 1979, the country's new Islamic rulers sneered at birth control as a Western plot. Fifteen years later, faced with twice the population but the same fixed, oil-based annual income, the mullahs have caught the spirit. With the zeal of converts, they have created a family-planning program that includes everything from aggressive public education to free vasectomies to financial disincentives that discourage anything larger then a three-child family.

The Pillars of Islam

A. Islam and Hajj Brahim's World

(Adapted from John Waterbury, *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East*, eds., Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn A. Early, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 178-81. Reprinted by permission.)

Hajj Brahim is a southern Moroccan merchant. His philosophy demonstrates the vitality of his belief system, which recognizes that other people live in different ways and answer to other codes of belief and conduct. Although other people's lives may touch him, they do not necessarily affect his own behavior. He speaks of "fate" or one's fate being "written." However, he clearly attributes his success to hard work and recognizes the change his efforts make in his life. Belief in fate does not reduce him to laziness or inactivity, but helps him make sense of his world. As a self-made businessman who has profited from industry and foresight, Hajj Brahim is not threatened by change. He sees enough room in the world for his beliefs to coexist with those of others, whether new or old.

Narrator: Hajj Brahim, how would you describe your faith and your belief system?

Hajj Brahim: First of all, I believe profoundly in Allah and what we are told to follow in the Qur'an. This basic belief helps me interpret life on a daily basis as well as provide some logic for me.

Narrator: What do you mean when you say it "helps you interpret life?"

Hajj Brahim: The world is changing very rapidly and the changes in this century alone have been incredible. Islam is predictable and consistent. I need that consistency.

Narrator: Can you explain what you mean by that statement?

Hajj Brahim: I believe that human relations are fragile and there is an inconsistency among human beings. But I accept that. Instead, I pay attention to the *situational* changes that cause adjustments in relationships. I believe Westerners are naive. People in the West want relationships that are constant and predictable. This denies the very essence of human affairs and ignores the logic that God has built into His world. The West has an obsession with undying friendships and eternal alliances, unconditional surrenders, fighting to the last man, and establishing lasting peace... Unconditional surrender? Just look at Germany and Japan today. Everybody has his day in the sun, but just for a little while.

Narrator: How does Islam help you understand the world?

Hajj Brahim: Without my belief in the one God, I might well give in to the anxiety generated by the ambiguous situations I face each day. But the world is not my only frame of reference, and I am not driven to make a lasting mark upon it. I have found certainty and clarity in Islam. Belief in Islam not only sustains me as I cope with my existence, but, insofar as it is *reasoned* belief more than faith, it also explains all that I must bear in this world. Islam is a *logical* system, all of whose parts mesh perfectly, all of whose workings can be understood. Islam is beautiful and logical. It is possible for me to live in the secular world because that world is explained by the religious world. Every act I perform has significance in the world of God.

Narrator: When you are in difficult situations, I have heard you Moroccans say "It is written" (*maktub*). Does that mean the situation is out of your control?

Hajj Brahim: It is true that there is an element of fatalism and the futility of human efforts in the face of the inscrutability of God's will. But I have never acted as if things were beyond my control. I actively submit to my fate.

Narrator: What does that mean?

Hajj Brahim: We are not helpless, and we make choices to try to better ourselves. When you hear people talking about *maktub*, what this really means is that everything that is done is done with the knowledge and consent of God. What is written always has a cause, and we know that cause. He who does not sow will not reap. Maktub means that we can do absolutely nothing against the will of God, but that we are capable of everything with His will. So you see it is not Islam that ties us down. Really the problem is discipline. It takes discipline to work hard. In the great age of Islam our religion provided that discipline. And it still does to the extent that there are Muslims who practice it. Religion is very practical and necessary in that sense. In the countryside, it is not the police who keep order but religion. In the cities, if a man is drunk or a woman indecent, it is not the police who prevent immorality. Good Muslims prevent it themselves. But this social discipline is dwindling, what with the youth and the hippies and our attachment to world civilization. And as it dwindles we are capable of less and less.

Narrator: Do you think Islam can help the young people today, as it has helped you?

Hajj Brahim: When I look at the future, all I can see is confusion. Our people are adrift; they don't understand their own values. On the one hand, the young abandon all their principles, and on the other, the traditionalists feel that all can be put right by a blind imposition of rigid rules. No wonder that our societies have gone astray! Islam is great precisely because it is not a tradition. It does not say that what our elders have done is necessarily good for us. The most traditional Muslims are the most ignorant. They become obsessed by what is unimportant. Neither clothes nor haircuts are religion. How can we face real problems when Muslims worry about miniskirts?

Narrator: Europeans also misunderstand Islam. How can you explain that?

Hajj Brahim: I cannot blame Europeans for not understanding Islam when so few Muslims can understand it. This has been a problem for Islam from the beginning. The simpleminded want easy solutions and magic. They don't realize that there is no magic, that everything has a cause and can be explained. That is the real magic, the rationality of God's universe. Bukhari recounts that at the time the Prophet went to Medina, a bedouin went to visit him at his camp. The bedouin was prepared to believe anything and probably wanted the Prophet to perform a few miracles. He rode up on his camel outside the praying grounds and was greeted by the Prophet, who invited him to prayer. The bedouin asked him if he should tie up his camel or count on God to keep the beast from wandering off. The Prophet said, 'Count on God, and tie up your camel.'

B. In An Antique Land

(Amitay Ghosh, *In An Antique Land*, New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1992, pp.74-7. Permission pending.)

Amitav Ghosh, a South Asian anthropologist, spent several years in Egypt. One of his concerns was to depict life in a small Egyptian village which he visited several times. In the selection below, Dr. Ghosh writes about Ramadan in the village.

Soon the month of Ramadan arrived and I began to think of taking a holiday...As the days passed the thought of my trip became ever more exciting. We were then well into Ramadan, and I was one of the handful of people in the hamlet who were not fasting. I had wanted to join the fast, but everyone insisted, "No, you can't fast, you're not Muslim - only Muslims fast at Ramadan." And so, being reminded of my exclusion every day by the drawn, thirsty faces around me, the thought of Cairo and Alexandria, and the proximity of others among the excluded, grew ever more attractive.

From the very first day of the lunar month the normal routines of the village had undergone a complete change: it was as though a segment of time had been picked from the calendar and turned inside out. Early in the morning, a good while before sunrise, a few young men would go from house to house waking everyone for the *suhur*, the early morning meal. After that, as the day progressed, a charged lassitude (exhaustion) would descend upon Lataifa. To ease the rigours of the fast people would try to finish all their most pressing bits of work early in the morning, while the sun was still low in the sky; it was impossible to do anything strenuous on an empty stomach and parched throat once the full heat of the day has set in. By noon the lanes of the hamlet would be still, deserted. The women would be in their kitchens and oven-rooms, getting their meals ready for the breaking of the fast at sunset. The men would sit in the shade of trees, or in their doorways, fanning themselves. Their mouths and lips would sometimes acquire thin white crusts, and often, as the hours wore on, their tempers would grow brittle.

I often wondered whether there were any people in the village who were occasionally delinquent in their observance of the fast. It was true that the most vulnerable people—pregnant women, young children, the sick and elderly, and so on—were exempted by religious law, but even for those of sound body the fast must have been very hard: those were long, fiercely hot summer days, and it must have been difficult indeed to last through them without food, water, or tobacco. Yet I never once saw a single person in Lataifa breaking the fast, in any way: there were occasional rumors that certain people in such and such village had been eating or drinking, but even those were very rare.

In every house as the sun sank slowly towards the horizon, the women would lay out their trays and serve the food they had cooked during the day. Their families would gather around, ravenous now, with cool, tall glasses of water resting in front of them. They would sit watching the lengthening shadows, tense and still, listening to their radios, waiting for the shaikhs of the mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo to announce the legal moment of sunset. It was not enough to see the sun going down with one's eyes; the breaking of the fast was the beginning of a meal of communion that embraced millions of people and the moment had to be celebrated publicly and in unison.

When the meal was finished and the trays had been cleared away, the men would wash and change and make their way to the mosque, talking, laughing, replete with a sense of well-being which the day's denials had made multiply sweet. I would go up to my room alone and listen to the call of the *muezzin* and try to think of how it must feel to know that on that very day, as the sun travelled around the earth, millions and millions of people in every corner of the globe had turned to face the same point, and site exactly the same words of prayer, with exactly the same prostrations as oneself. A phenomenon on that scale was beyond my imagining, but the exercise helped me understand why so many people in the hamlet had told me not to fast: to belong to that immense community was a privilege which they had to re-earn every year, and the effort made them doubly conscious of the value of its boundaries.

In the evenings, after the prayers, the hamlet would be full of life and laughter. Where at other times of the year the lanes and paths were generally empty by eight o'clock, they were now full of bustle and activity: children going from house to house, chanting and demanding gifts, and people visiting their families and staying up late, gossiping and joking with their friends.

Shi‘ism

Soon after the death of the Prophet, a major schism (split) occurred among the followers of Islam. This developed into two major branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi‘i. Sunni is the majority faith, practiced most widely throughout the Muslim world. [Shi‘i Islam today is the majority faith of Iran.]

The following two selections by Tabataba'i and Shahabi, two of the great modern Shi‘i scholars, attempt to explain the root cause of the schism between Sunni and Shi‘i Islam from a strictly Shi‘i point of view.

I. The Historical Growth of Shi‘ism

(Allamah Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, trans., Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1975, © SUNY Press. Permission pending.)

Shi‘ism began with a reference made for the first time to the followers of ‘Ali, the first leader of the Household of the Prophet, during the lifetime of the Prophet himself...The Holy Prophet during the first days of his prophecy...was commanded to invite his closest relatives to come to his religion, (and) told them clearly that whoever would be the first to accept his invitation would become his successor and inheritor. ‘Ali was the first to step forward and embrace Islam. The Prophet accepted ‘Ali's submission to the faith and thus fulfilled his promise.

...During the period of the prophesy ‘Ali performed valuable services and made remarkable sacrifices. (He even slept in the Prophet's bed, pretending he was the Prophet, when the infidels of Mecca decided to kill Mohammad and surrounded his house. ‘Ali also served in many battles and without his presence it is likely that Islam and the Muslims could have been uprooted.) ...For Shi‘is the central evidence of ‘Ali's legitimacy as successor was the event of Ghadir Khumm when the Prophet chose ‘Ali to the "general guardianship" of the people and made ‘Ali, like himself, their "guardian."

...The friends and followers of ‘Ali believed that after the death of the Prophet the *caliphate* and religious authority belonged to ‘Ali...it is only the events that occurred during the few days of the Prophet's final illness that indicated there was opposition to their view...(while the preparations were being made for the burial), the friends and followers of ‘Ali received news of the activity of another group (which was later to form the majority) who had gone to the mosque...to select a *caliph* for the Muslims with the aim of ensuring the welfare of the community and solving its immediate problems. They did this without consulting the Household of the Prophet, his relatives or many of his friends...and without providing them with the least information...‘Ali and his friends protested against the act of choosing the caliph by consultation or election, and also against those who were responsible for carrying it out. They even presented their own proofs and arguments, but the answer they received was that the welfare of the Muslims was at stake and the solution lay in what had been done.

It was this protest and criticism which separated the majority from the minority that were following ‘Ali and made his followers known to society as the "partisans" or "shi‘ah" of ‘Ali. The caliphate was (concerned that) Muslim society become divided into sections comprised of the majority and a minority. They claimed the Shi‘is stood opposed to Muslim society...

Shi‘ism was condemned from the first moment because of the political situation of the time...‘Ali, in order to safeguard the well-being of Islam and the Muslims, and also because of a lack of sufficient political and military power, did not try to lead an uprising against the political order...Yet those who protested against the established caliphate refused to surrender to the majority in certain questions of faith and continued to hold that the succession of the Prophet and the religious authority belonged by right to ‘Ali...and invited people to become his followers.

The opponents of ‘Ali claimed he was a courageous man but did not possess political skill...he could have temporarily made peace with his opponents...approaching them through peace and friendship. In this way he could have strengthened his caliphate...What people who hold this view forget is that the movement of ‘Ali was based on ...a radical and revolutionary religious movement; therefore, it could not have been accomplished through compromise or flattery or forgery.

‘Ali was successful in three fundamental ways:

> (1) As the result of his just and upright manner of living he revealed once again the beauty and attractiveness of the way of life of the Holy Prophet, especially to the younger generation...he lived in simplicity and poverty like the poorest of people...
> (2) ...he left behind among the Islamic community a valuable treasury of the truly divine sciences and Islamic intellectual disciplines. Nearly 11,000 of his proverbs and short sayings on different intellectual, religious and social subjects have been recorded...He was the first in Islam to delve directly into the question of metaphysics...
> (3) He trained a large number of religious scholars and Islamic savants, among who are found the forefathers of the Sufis.

After the death of ‘Ali, his son, Hasan ibn ‘Ali, who is recognized by the Shi‘is as their second Imam, became caliph. But the opposition, led by Mu'awiyah, began to wage war against Hasan and,...Hasan handed the caliphate to Mu'awiyah on the condition it be returned to him upon the death of Mu'awiyah. Mu'awiyah announced he was interested in ruling over the Muslims and declared his agreement with Hasan "null and void." ...Yazid, the young son without a religious personality, was named the "crown prince" and the successor. Mu'awiyah conducted a campaign against Hasan and his followers, making remarks against them in all the mosques and killing the most outstanding of Hasan's followers. During the twenty years of Mu'awiyah's rule, neither Imam Hasan nor Husayn could change the circumstances under which they lived. Some Sunnis say that God excused Mu'awiyah's group for the sins they committed.

Yazid succeeded his father and the three years of his caliphate were atrocious. Husayn, the grandson of the Holy Prophet, was massacred along with his aides and children. He (Yazid) also killed women and children in Medina and destroyed and burned the Ka'bah.

For the next seventy years, the caliphate was ruled by an eleven-member group. It was a political success but a religious error. The Shi'is went through a dark period. The tragic death of Husayn played a major role in holding Shi'ism together and Shi'im spread. By the end of the first century A.H., the city of Qum in Persia became a Shi'i settlement.

In the century after the death of the Holy Prophet, the caliphates can be divided into two groups. The first four caliphs (Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali) were called the "rightly guided caliphs." The others who began with Mu'awiyah did not possess the virtues of the rightly guided caliphs. They (Umayyads) caused so much public hatred that the last caliph and his family had difficulty escaping from the capital. No one would give them shelter. Finally, after much wandering in the deserts, they set out for Mecca dressed as porters...and finally succeeded in disappearing among the mass of the people.

II. The Roots of Shi'ism in Early Islamic History

(Mahmud Shahabi, "Shi'i" In K. Morgan, ed., *Islam: The Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims*, New York, NY, The Ronald Press Co., currently John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1958. Reprinted by permission.)

The word Shi'i, meaning follower, has come to be accepted as the designation for those Muslims who are followers of 'Ali - who was second only to Muhammad. They are the followers of God's revelation in the Qur'an, of Muhammad who was the last of the Prophets, and of 'Ali who was the Prophet's choice for his successor...The Prophet had a daughter, Fatimah, by his wife Khadijah. Because he loved and honored her very much he married her to 'Ali, his most trusted disciple. Muhammad was also very fond of their own children, his grandsons Hasan and Husayn...to hurt Husan or Husayn, or Fatimah or 'Ali was considered a defiance of God and of Muhammad...The Prophet recommended his family to people in private and public..."Oh people, I will die and leave two things to you so that if you follow them you will never be misled - they are the Holy Book, the Qur'an, and my family."...This was an indication that 'Ali should be the next Caliph, that is, Successor to Muhammad.

Ali was Muhammad's cousin and had been brought up by the Prophet. From his early childhood until the day the Prophet died, 'Ali was with the Prophet...he learned about his aims and his methods of instruction so that he understood Muhammad's teachings better than anyone else... Consequently, after the death of Muhammad, 'Ali felt assured of his position...and went on to fulfill Muhammad's wishes for his funeral. Meanwhile a few followers...driven by selfishness, ambition, and a great desire for power, gathered their followers to decide for themselves the question of the succession. Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubaydah, weakened the position of their rivals...Abu Bakr was named caliph. This choice led to a conflict between his supporters and other Muslims but they recognized this could lead to their own downfall. Therefore, for the sake of Islam, the people gradually took an oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr as Caliph.

At the same time, there were people who knew that the position of Caliph should have been given to 'Ali and they recognized him as the leader of Islam...they eventually became the sect known as Shi'ism. They believed that Muhammad's successor should have been appointed by God and the Prophet himself...'Ali himself did not give his approval (to the caliphate) until six months later.

Abu Bakr, who was Caliph for about two years, nominated 'Umar as his successor. 'Umar was a man of will, a ruthless administrator, and a man who abstained from earthly pleasures. As Caliph he decided to extend the border of Islam and conquered Iran and some of the Roman territories, organizing a widespread empire.

While 'Umar was Caliph, 'Ali's position was supreme...For ten years 'Umar served as Caliph and made great conquests for the great glory of Islam...Instead of making 'Ali the next Caliph, 'Umar appointed six people, including 'Ali and 'Uthman, to select one person from among themselves as the next Caliph. [But the election was not fair because 'Uthman had a plan which would make him Caliph.]

As Caliph, 'Uthman acted against the principles of the previous Caliphs. He made his own corrupt relatives governors; he used the treasury to further his own interests. Democracy, freedom, justice and equality...were silenced by 'Uthman's rule. The people rose against him and he was killed in his own home twelve years after he became Caliph.

...before his death, 'Uthman saw that he was surrounded by Muslims who disapproved of his politics...he asked help from Mu'awiyah, who was a relative in the Umayyud family...a war was started against 'Ali with a large army of people from Syria. 'Ali was tricked by Mu'awiyah...this resulted in mass desertion from 'Ali's side...It is one of the great puzzles of history that a group of people who believed in 'Ali and had made great sacrifices for his sake...should desert him and even take up their swords against him...The men who deserted 'Ali and abandoned their faith became famous in history as unbelievers and were known as Kharijites—the people who have forsaken the faith. 12,000 of these Kharijites formed an army and tried to kill 'Ali but (through preaching) 'Ali convinced 8,000 to join him but did not eliminate the Kharijites...5 years later, while 'Ali was praying in a mosque, he was struck down with a poisoned sword by a Kharijite.

...In writing about 'Ali's sublime qualities and counting his virtues, one can agree with what is said by one of his followers, "To describe your qualities, it would not suffice to wet the finger with all the water in the seas in order to leaf through your book of virtues."

III. Shi'ism and the Ta'ziyyah

(Peter Chelkowski, *Alserat, Imam Husayn Conference Number*, Vol. XII, No. 1, Spring, 1986. Reprinted by permission.)

Among Shi'is, a ta'ziyyah, or traditional passion play is performed/celebrated to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn. Most of these manuscripts are collections of paper, written separately for each character in the play. The play, although devoted to 'Abbas, Husayn's half-brother and standard-bearer, gives an overall picture of the suffering and death of Husayn, his sons and his followers. In the ta'ziyyah plays all the characters discuss their pre-determined fate. In reality, the death of 'Abbas took place before Husayn but on the stage 'Abbas describes the death of Husayn and his relatives, arousing the emotions of the audience. The bulk of the play deals with the attempt by Shimr, the villain, to seduce 'Abbas away from Husayn in order to become the commander of the enemy's army. This is a bribe which 'Abbas repeatedly refuses to accept. A second dramatic device is that of deception, questioning the courage of the hero. In this case, 'Abbas covers his face and intercepts 'Ali Akbar who is bringing water, to test him...The several references in the text to the sins of the Shi'i and the redemptive character of Husayn's death bring the tragedy to the present. The actors and the spectators feel just as responsible for Husayn's death as those who betrayed and abandoned him in the year 61/680.

Shimr: I am your slave, ready to sacrifice myself. I have a command from Yazid, my lord. I am the son of Zal, Rustam. I am the Warrior Afrasiyab. Like Faramarz, I am the champion of the army. I am a temple, I am a convert, a priest, a monk, a Zangi. I closed the book on 'Uthman. I am a wall of iron. Woe to the time when my horse is saddled and I enter the war. Neither the enemy's horse nor the rider shall last long fighting me. Now, hear more: I am a rogue and a thief...I am Satan's guide and preceptor. I am the teacher of that wicked creature. 770 followers learned from me. I know the mysteries of all nations. Only one equals me in knowledge. I am the mufti, I am graceful, I am a sage; I may be doomed to burn in hell...I am an old dragon, a scorpion, a goat, a snake. Sometimes I am thunder, sometimes lightning, sometimes fire, sometimes soft, sometimes cold, sometimes burning like fire, sometimes fast, sometimes slow, sometimes as black as a snake. At times I am sweet as sugar and at times I am bitter as venom. I am the enemy of God, His Prophet and Murtada. I am the oppressor. You may think I am a grocer from Damascus or a haberdasher from Zanzibar (in Africa) or India or one of those filthy mouse-eating Arabs. I am your enemy, traitors and adulterers. I have seven breasts, just like a dog.

[The actor tries to protect himself against the audience to prove that he himself is not Shimr, whom he hates.]

I am the role-carrier of Shimr and the invoker of the King of religion, Husayn. I hate Shimr.

'Abbas: O shameless bastard and impudent son of damned Zuljushan. I swear by the great God, His prophet, and by the broken heart of the pure Zahra that no matter what their number, no matter where they come from...I will not be afraid or alarmed. I will draw my sword, call Haydar's name and attack your armies, O outcast upon the Day of Judgment. I swear by the hands of Husayn's standard-bearer, which are the hands of 'Ali. Who can equal God's hands? O damned people. When I put my feet in the stirrups and mount my horse, I will not take off my boots nor shall I remove the helmet of bravery and zeal. I shall not unfasten the lion's armor from my back until I have had justice from the people of oppression and evil. Then I shall ride to Syria where I shall unseat the damnable adulterer, the cruel, oppressive son of the cannibal Hind, from his throne. I shall humiliate him to the fullest and bring him to the bench of the honorable judge Husayn Ibn 'Ali Abu Talib. All the people shall know that courage such as this is not characteristic of ordinary men...I shall be proud of myself before the jinn and angels because of this great achievement. If the purpose were not Husayn's martyrdom I would get permission from him to use my sharp sword to strike terror...But what can I do? If I do not immolate myself for the followers of my father, who will become the intercessor for this poor nation of sinners? I swear by God that I have accepted to die, and have my head raised upon spears. I shall be grateful for God's mercy. Go, O son of Satan. Boasting to 'Abbas, from now until the day of judgment, will do you no good...I am a lion and the son of the Lion of God...Even if you fill the universe with soldiers I will not fear them. I will fight all of them and corner them. I will erase the name of Yazid, that infidel dog, from the face of the earth. But what can I do? The Shi'is are sinners and need Husayn's intercession. O friends of Husayn, cry out 'O 'Ali!'

[In the encampment of Husayn]

'Ali Akbar: O God, what is happening on this plain of calamity? ...This night the spiteful enemy has launched a surprise attack on us. With no water in my throat, I am going to fight the deceitful foe on this miserable plain. Bless me, should I die, my dear father Husayn.

Qasim: O God, what is happening on this plain of calamity?...This night the spiteful enemy has launched a surprise attack on us. With no water in my throat, I am going to fight the deceitful foe on this miserable plain. Bless me, should I die, my dear uncle Husayn.

Sakinah: O Lord, has the world come to an end? Have the wheels of the universe stopped turning? O uncle, get up and take a look at us. I see the standard but not the standard-bearer. Aunt Zaynab, homeless Zaynab, wake, up, wake up, wake up. The cruel enemy surrounds the camp. Wake up, wake up.

Zaynab: O, sweet singing nightingale, why are you wailing in the middle of the night? Why are you sighing so desperately from your heart? Has fire kindled your soul? Why are you wailing in the middle of the night?

Sakinah: Come, O aunt, observe the turmoil and listen to the enemy's drums beating. I have no desire to live. Wake up my father.

Zaynab: Zaynab is distressed. Has her luck turned away from her? Prepare ourself for captivity. The confusion and uproar is coming from the enemy. Zaynab will certainly be taken prisoner. Wake up brother. Wake up from your restful sleep and look into Zaybab's tearful eyes.

Imam: You interrupted my dream of a musk-scented paradise. You interrupted my conversation with my father and grandfather. I heard my mother's voice saying, "Husayn will be our guest tomorrow night." You interrupted my dream about my brother.

Zaynab: O companion of my sad heart, the enemy has penetrated the camp. You can hear the beating of the drums of war by the despicable enemy. Listen, O brother, for I am going to be taken into captivity.

'Abbas: I call upon you Qasim and Akbar. Roar the thunderous cry *'Allahu akbar.'*

Imam: Call 'Abbas, my close companion and great and gallant warrior.

Zaynab [entering the tent of 'Abbas]: 'Abbas, O brother, light of Haydar's eyes, the dearest offspring of the Prophet is calling you. I see the standard, but I do not see the standard-bearer, maybe he has deserted us.

Imam: Do not wail, dear sister. Hurry and send 'Ali Akbar to me.

Zaynab: [entering the tent of 'Ali Akbar]: Akbar, my darling, open your eyes. Fear makes my bones tremble. Open your eyes. Alas, O brother, there is no sign of 'Ali Akbar. Where has he gone? My sweet 'Ali Akbar?

Imam: Do not wail, do not weep, do not groan! Go, call the light of Hassan's eyes in my presence.

Zaynab: [entering the tent of Qasim] O tranquillity of my soul. O sweet Qasim is not in his bed either. Fate has turned against us.

Imam: O sister, gather all the children and go sit in the tents. I shall look for 'Abbas and Akbar so that I can thwart the army of darkness. O brave brother 'Abbas, standard-bearer of my army, and 'Ali Akbar, my son, where have you gone? *[sees 'Abbas]* O 'Abbas where have you been? Without you I am helpless.

'Abbas: O mighty King, joy of Fatimah, greetings to you. Why do you hang your head? Why are you so sad? Are you thinking about martyrdom?

Imam: O light of my tearful eyes, greetings to you. Joy of my heart and my soul, greetings. Your absence in the encampment distressed me. I had to guard it alone against the infidel villain.

'Abbas: Know, dear Brother, that in the middle of the night Shimr came to my tent. His words set fire to my heart and finally I chased him away with a sword.

Imam: I have heard the commander of the enemy gave a written decree of amnesty to Shimr to deliver it to you. Go ahead, deny your brotherhood with the prophet's heir. Tell that helpless Zaynab she is not your sister. You need not help me, the forlorn me. 'Ali Akbar suffers for martyrdom with us. Go and save yourself, and God be with you.

'Abbas: O friends, what should I do with my shame? Husayn has discharged me from his service. My sword and dagger are useless except in the service of my brother. If you, Husayn, are not my protector I have no use for a helmet. I shall go barefoot to do homage to my father's grave. Where shall I turn for friends? O people, I am abandoned! Husayn had discharged me from his service—I am abandoned. O earth, I shall bury my head in your bosom for I have no mother to lean on. Zephyr wind, blow on Medinah and tell my mother I have been abandoned. I am without friends or family. The forlorn are buried without a shroud or camphor, and they take their dreams and hopes to their graves with them. How awful it is to die in a strange land. O dear Sakina, my niece, be my intercessor with Husayn. Go to your father and beg him on my behalf and tell him, "O father, my uncle seems abandoned by family and friends. He is alone."

Sakinah: O matchless uncle, why are you crying? May Sakina be your sacrifice. O uncle, do you want Husayn's head mounted on a spear? I am distraught. Do you know what you have done? Uncle, you broke your promise to my father. You conversed with the damnable Shimr. You broke my father's back.

'Abbas: Come here, dear niece. Come close, O broken-hearted one. Sit on my lap like a flower. Your sorrow has set me on fire. Your face is pale as the moon from thirst and there are fever blisters upon your lips. I am the water carrier and it shames me. There is nothing I can do. Blood runs down my eyes from sorrow. Husayn is friendless and weary, a stranger in a sea of infidels. His young men will all die and Qasim shall wear a shroud instead of wedding garments. After I die the strong of our lives will dry up as in autumn and the world will succumb to the terror of our enemies. They will show their wickedness and set fire to our tents. I grieve for you, for they will burn your clothes and chain your arms and laugh at your cries and slap your beautiful face. Where will I be at that hour, to take revenge upon these infidels, to save you from evil? *[There is a pause.]* O Husayn, to whose court angels come in need, no one has ever dismissed a servant such as 'Abbas from his court. If you are ashamed of me as a brother, take me as a servant, do not think that I am the darkling of Medinah. Don't send me away from your blessed presence. It would be the greatest disloyalty to leave you. Take the standard away from me and give it to 'Ali Akbar and let him be your standard-bearer instead of me.

Imam: Don't say these words, O 'Abbas. You are my most respected brother, O 'Abbas. Do you want to make me sad? Go say farewell to the distressed Zaynab.

'Abbas: For the sake of the martyrs, I beg forgiveness from whomever I made unhappy or injured in this journey. Pretend it never happened.

Zaynab: O joy of my youth and cane of my old age. You're going now, and by God my captivity will come true. My humiliation will be a guarantee of your eternal life.

'Abbas: Alas, from now on it will not be possible for us any more to go from Hijaz to Medinah, in glorious grandeur, so that I could carry the flag in front of your camel all the way to the Prophet's grave...

An Issue of Identity

Community

Istanbul Boy

(*The Autobiography of Aziz Nesin*, Boyle Gelmis Boyle Gitmez, Anne McCann-Baker, ed., Joseph S. Jacobson, trans., 1979, *Middle East Monographs*, No 3. Permission granted by Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Texas, pp. 1, 180-182, 211-213, 217-220.)

My father, an Anatolian village boy, came to Istanbul at the age of thirteen. My mother, from another Anatolian village, also came to Istanbul as a very small child. They had to make this long journey, meet in Istanbul and get married so that I could come into the world.

The choice was not left to me, so I was born at a very unsuitable time—the bloodiest and most fiery days of World War I, in 1915. Again, the choice not being in my hands, my birth occurred not only at an unseemly time but also in an unfavorable place, on Heybeli Island. Heybeli lies offshore of Istanbul and was the summer residence of Turkey's richest people. And since the rich couldn't live without the poor—they had such a great need for them—we, too, lived on the island...I don't mean to imply with these remarks that I was unlucky. On the contrary, I consider myself as being quite fortunate in not coming from a rich, noble and famous family.

They named me "Nusret." In Turkish, this Arabic word means "God's Help." It was a name entirely fitting to us because my family, destitute of any other hope, bound all their hope in God.

Sultan Suleyman The Lawgiver Elementary School

Father was content at living in a house by a ruined mosque, where prayers were called from the minaret so close at hand. When Mother gazed out the window though, it was never toward the side where the cemetery was located. Rather, it was out unto the distance.

"This cemetery and the cypresses make my heart gloomy."

Her condition was gradually deteriorating. Frequently she visited the hospital, to be examined by the doctors. She was exhausted—no appetite. Many days, she was unable to get out of bed.

Papa wanted me to call the prayers from that half-fallen-down minaret too, but Mother feared for me to go up there in the belief that it might completely collapse. However, I climbed the minaret a few times with Fevzi and called the prayer.

From time to time, Fevzi comes to our house to study his lessons. I eyed his books with longing and envy. He draws very nice pictures in his drawing notebook, and I look at them in amazement. He could place a glass of water in front of him and draw one exactly like it on the paper. He reproduced all the lights and shadows of the glass and the reflections of the light on the water, just as they were. Upon seeing this, I too started drawing pictures. As time passed, his influence on me didn't decrease, it grew stronger. Later, upon starting school, I would insist, "I'm going to be an artist." As a matter of fact, I had never seen an artist; in our family, such an occupation had never been seen or heard of. Years hence, I was destined to become an officer, but I also went to the Academy of Fine Arts and studied drawing, all due to Fevzi Agabey's influence.

Occasionally he'd ask me: "Why don't you go to school?"

"Well, father doesn't send me."

"Hamdi's school is right close. You should go too. I graduated from that school myself."

"How can I go?"

"I'll teach you, show you the way. You know a lot, anyway. Let's write an application, request examination, enter the exams. You could even earn a diploma. After all, those who have finished elementary school don't know as much as you do."

Mother was all for this and asked Fevzi: "Will they give him the examination?"

"They will, Aunt..."

"Would the elementary school give him the diploma?"

"Yes they would, Aunt. Then when he gets the diploma, we will register him at the Davutpasha School, where I go."

Mother and I were both tremendously pleased.

"School's out now. As soon as it opens and registration starts, I'll write an application."

Sultan Suleyman the Lawgiver Elementary School is behind the Suleymaniye Mosque, at the top of the hill leading down to Tahtakale. Whenever I got the chance, I sneaked over there. From a distance, I stare into the school windows and hang around the schoolyard. Will I be able to enter that schoolhouse door someday?

The Artesian Well

I am thrilled: This is the day I'm going to take the entrance examinations. From the results of this test, it will be established what grade I'll be a pupil in. I've awakened early and washed myself. While eating breakfast, the morsels pile up in my throat. Mother dresses me. She hugs and kisses me. "I'm praying for you, my son. Goodbye now!"

Many children were assembled in front of the Sultan Suleyman Elementary School. All had been brought by their mothers or fathers. I was by myself. A sense of loneliness engulfed me. I went up the stone steps, my head swimming in the thrum of children's voices, and knocked on the principal's door.

"Come in."

As I am facing the principal, he becomes five, ten, twenty, a hundred principals, all swirling in the air. The whirligig of principals spins in the air.

I feel about to fall.

"What is it?"

"I came for the examination, sir. They said I should come today."

"See Zekai Bey!"

I leave. Zekai Bey. Zekai Bey . . . Who is Zekai Bey? Where is Zekai Bey?

Someone says, "In the teachers' room."

I find Zekai Bey.

"Sir, the principal sent me; I'm to be examined."

"So-o, you're the one?"

My application is in front of him. There are three teachers in the room, one wearing a turban.

They open a reader.

"Read!"

I read loudly. It's very easy for me. They open another page. I read. They open a page from a fifth grade book. I read.

"Let's see you write . . . "

They dictate, I write. As I write, they dictate more difficult things. I write. Watching their lips from the corner of my eye, I see that they are glancing at one another in astonishment.

The turbaned hoja opens the Koran in front of me. I chant the Koran.

"Bravo. . . Bra-a-avo!"

He opens a page in the middle of the Koran. I chant that. Since this part is one I have memorized well, I decide to pretend great learning, so I recite by heart without looking at the book. The turbaned hoja exclaims, "Amazing, amazing!"

One of the teachers has me write a sentence.

"Which is the subject of this sentence?"

I tell him.

"The verb?"

I tell him.

"The conjugation form of this verb?"

"*Mazi-i shuhudi, mufret gaip...*" (dubitative past, singular, third person)

They are truly amazed. One of the teachers ran out and called other teachers and the principal. They whisper among themselves.

The principal questions and the teachers question.

"He has a perfect knowledge of grammar and syntax, sir..."

"Extraordinary..."

"Let him recite the Koran and you listen.... Do you know the *Tebareke* (the 67th Sura, 'God be Praised')."

"I know it, sir."

I begin to recite: "*Euzu* billahi minehsheytan-ir-rajim, bismillah-irrahim."

"You know *tecvit* too?" (the art of chanting the Koran).

"Yes sir."

"Have you read *Siver-i Enbiya*? (*Siver-i Enbiya* means History of the Prophets.)

"I have read it, sir."

"Relate the *Hendek Gazvesi*, my son." (The Battle of the Trench.)

I relate it.

"Allah, Allah! Praise God!"

They whisper among themselves.

"Let's question him on mathematics."

They question. They're amazed at what I know and ask harder questions.

"Let's quiz him on geometry. What is the volume of a cylinder whose base is five square centimeters, and height is ten centimeters?"

It's been forty years since, and the exact questions aren't still in my mind, but they were problems such as these....

One of them said, "We must give him his diploma."

I become swell-headed.

"I've studied French, to, sir."

"Yes..."

Zekai Bey says: "Let's ask him a question from Natural Science."

From Natural Science? I'd never heard of such a thing! Forty years have since passed, but the question remains clear in my mind; I can never forget it.

"Tell us about 'artesian', my boy. What is artesian?"

Artesian? I'd never heard of it. I remain silent.

I still remember the second question too:

"What is the composition of the air?"

What does composition of the air mean? I'm silent.

They ask me about geography; I don't know anything. They ask me about history. I don't know.

They were even more amazed that, while I knew those so-called important things, I didn't know about these so-called little things.

After all, Uncle Galip hadn't taught me about artesian or the composition of air.

I am on the verge of tears and the principal and teachers are also very sad.

I am ten years old and, according to age, I should be in the third grade. They take me to the third grade.

One day while climbing up Haseki Hill, Mother, taking my arm, had said:

"Be a doctor, my son; be a doctor and make me well."

I'll study, I'll become a doctor, I'll make my mother well!

I am entering the courtyard of the Suleymaniye Mosque, the great courtyard .... I sit down on the outside steps of the mosque and cry; I am crying for joy.

The Mantle of The Prophet Religion and Politics in Iran

(Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of The Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1985, pp.38, 40-7, 50-1, 68, 74. Permission pending.)

For 'Ali, entering the state school in 1948 was a great break from the privacy of the *andaruni*, the slow formalities of the *biruni*, and the thoughtful trips to the bazaar. School was a long, methodical, and rather public exercise in learning what his teachers had decided was the proper place for things.

The tall man began: "Ferdowsi, our great national poet, says: 'He who knows is powerful; thanks to his knowledge the old man's heart is young.' This is written on the building behind me and in your schoolbooks. Remember it. You have come here to learn. You can learn only if you are obedient, orderly, and clean. Bring your own drinking cup to school. You may bring your lunch, your own notebooks, pencils, and pencil sharpener and *nothing* else. No whistles, no flashlights, nothing. The head of every boy must be cropped at the start of each school year unless his parents have arranged permission for him to keep his hair. A doctor will come next week to vaccinate all boys who do not have vaccination cards. The vice-principal is in charge of discipline."...'Ali had learned to read and write from his father. The next day of class the teacher called the roll and looked closely at each student with his "Very good, but" expression as he handed each clean-copy notebook back. For the next eight years he committed every textbook to memory, filled every notebook according to instructions, and answered every teacher by quoting the teacher's words back to him.

Geography started with the oceans and continents, moved to the great mountain ranges and rivers of the world, and then to Iran. In treating Iran it started with major topographical features, climatic regions, mineral resources, and so forth; it then treated small features province by province, then district by district.

The nineteenth-century shahs of Iran closed the missionary schools and the schools of the Jewish, Christian, and Baha'i minorities. By mid-century there was essentially one form of education in Iran, and if it required a few courses on Islam, it was nevertheless secular education, and it belonged to the state. Of the religious schools only the *madreseh*, the Islamic college, survived.

'Ali knew at first glance that a schoolmate's friend, who was about fifteen, looked the part of a *madreseh* student, with his turban, black mullah coat, and bits of wooly beard, while 'Ali himself looked like what he was, a ten-year-old boy with only a dark-blue frock coat and a shaming lack of beard. But he was wearing a green turban, which, even though it had only two loops, still, by its color, distinguished him as a *sayyed*, in contrast to his companion, who had only the white turban of an ordinary person.

His companion brought him to a classroom that was in the lower story of another of the tall arches. Most of the students fourteen and under were wearing light-tan and light-brown frock coats; the older students wore the aba, a black coat, split down the front and furnished with full sleeves, which is the characteristic dress of mullahs everywhere. The students were sitting cross-legged in a semicircle around a teacher who sat on the second step of a movable set of stairs and smoked a cigarette with quiet concentration. When the teacher turned to face the class 'Ali noticed that there were two white streaks in his beard, evenly placed near the corners of his mouth. He was holding a truly gigantic copy of the prescribed book, so much bigger than 'Ali's own copy that 'Ali was at first afraid that his fifteen-year-old companion had dumped him in the wrong class.

The teacher put out his cigarette in a brass tea-glass coaster, cleared his throat, opened the gigantic book and began: "In the name of God, the merciful, the Beneficent. Yesterday we read the opening discourse of *Mullah Abdollah's Commentary*, in which he explains why the text underlying his commentary is called "The Ultimate Rectification of Speech in Writing About Logic." As Mullah Abdollah explains, the author of the underlying text, Taftazani, believed that no one could write a summary briefer than his "Ultimate Rectification of the Essentials of Logic."

"Today we reach the introduction, in which Taftazani says"—and the teacher read in Arabic—"If knowledge is assent to a relationship, then it is verification; otherwise, it is representation." (The teacher clapped the enormous book shut and began to speak in Persian.) "There are two kinds of knowledge, and today we will discuss the difference between them. Sometimes we understand a thing without judging it, and such understanding is simple, *not* a compound act. It is called 'representation,' because we make a picture for ourselves in our mind, a 'representation.' When I say I 'know' this book before me, or 'know' Zaid or the servant of Zaid, I know each of these by a simple act of immediate knowledge, a mental representation in which I exercise no judgement.

"Other times, we judge and we make a relation between two things. To use the example mentioned in the Commentary, my knowledge that 'Zaid is standing' is composed of two things about which I have made a mental judgment. I have judged that Zaid has the status of someone standing." (Here the teacher turned his right hand to point upward, perhaps to represent Zaid standing. 'Ali's mind raced home to Kazem, "the servant of 'Ali and his family," and 'Ali wondered if Kazem would be offended if he knew that 'Ali was comparing him to someone in a book.)

"Consider." (The teacher now held the enormous book upright with a hand on each side.) "In analysis of the activity of the mind we have these elements: the subject 'Zaid,' the predicate 'standing,' and the relationship between the two. But maybe we also have a fourth element, judgment, which makes it possible to ask: 'Is Zaid standing or not?' After our mind has pictured the subject 'Zaid,' the predicate 'standing,' the possible relation that we express in Persian by the verb 'is,' we judge whether the predicate is true of the subject; because we can also say, 'Zaid is not standing.' We make a positive or negative judgment of the possible relationship.

"Yes. *But* another approach denies that we have four elements. According to this approach we have just subject and predicate and our mind judges whether this subject belongs with this predicate or not. So we envisage only two things, and the third element, judgment, decides that yes, 'Zaid is standing,' or no, 'Zaid is not standing.' In any case, whether there are three or four elements this knowledge is not like my simple, straightforward knowledge of Zaid or this book. It is compound knowledge, composed of more than one element, and we call it 'a verification.'" (The teacher briefly raised the book in front of him, apparently for emphasis. Years later when 'Ali taught in a *madreseh*, one day he found himself manhandling the text, instinctively following the example of his admired teacher of logic.)

One of the thirty-odd students spoke in the deliberately deep voice of a fourteen-year-old: "A problem. You said that knowing 'the servant of Zaid' is to know a piece of simple knowledge, a 'representation' in the mind. But it is compound knowledge, a 'verification,' since it involves a relation between two things: 'Zaid' and 'servant.' Then why do you and the commentary call it simple knowledge?" A student in a very shiny new tan frock coat on the other side of the class was nodding his white turban in energetic agreement. 'Ali knew the answer because he had thought of the question the night before and seen its irrelevance. Yet his mind kept racing home to Kazem, whose relation to the family, he knew, could never be explained by saying "the servant of 'Ali" or "the servant of 'Ali's father," and he wanted to tell Kazem that he was not trapped inside any logical cage either as a "representation" or a "verification."

The teacher now opened his book and read Mullah Abdollah's commentary on the sentence of Taftazani, which said in a very few lines in Arabic what the teacher had said in many more words in Persian. 'Ali had read the commentary very carefully the night before and had slowly convinced himself that he understood it completely. He was impressed by how right he had been about the meaning of nearly every part of the text and commentary. But he was also impressed by how very clear the book seemed after the teacher's explanation and defense of the commentator, and how thorough, careful, and convincing he found the book's approach.

An Iranian Village Boyhood

(Mehdi Abedi and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp.321-334. Reprinted by permission.)

Dareh (Valley) is the name of the little village in which I was born...It is a poor hill village in a narrow valley of the middle ranges of the Shirkuh Mountains, above the basin plain on which sit the larger villages Mehriz and Manshad, to the south of the city of Yazd in central Iran. Villagers distinguish three neighborhoods, or *mahalleh*: upper, lower, and middle. We lived in the middle.

...And of course there was my father, who always bragged about his calligraphy, his ability to understand religious issues, and his ability to cure illnesses with talismans. If a girl could not find a husband, if a woman's husband no longer liked her and wanted another wife, for any ill, my father had the book of talismans and prayers. He was the male healer for the village, combining herbs, powders, liquids, and tablets, as well as talismans and prayers. For curing, in most cases, he did not charge. He had a shop in which he also sharpened knives, sickles, and saws, repaired broken china and stone cooking pots. For this he was paid by the villagers in kind: eggs, yogurt, dried nuts, and other agricultural products. Even peddlers from outside the village often took payment for their wares in kind.

My father was also the supervisor of the passion plays for some forty years, and people would gather at our house from both the upper and lower village on the festival of Ashura. From there a grand procession of floats and *dasteh sineh-zani* (flagellants, mainly boys and young men) would go to the *husayniyeh* down at the bottom of the lower neighborhood.

There were only so many lead roles. Most men participated as porters for the heavy floats. In other villages the floats might be carried by trucks, but our village was too steep and narrow. The floats illustrated all the major events in the life of Imam Husayn for the ten days preceding his martyrdom and the days immediately following, when the women and children were taken off as prisoners to Damascus. The procession was accompanied by lines of black-shirted men beating their breasts with their hands or chains and chanting rhythmic dirges mourning the fate of Husayn. They all wore Arab *kafiyah*s or headbands (*aqqal*). Only the sick and disabled stood on the sidelines with the women and girls.

The time frame of the passion play was in fact a mythic, rather than a chronological one, for, of course, all the events were presented on the floats simultaneously prior to and during the action in the center of the *husayniyeh*. Thus the head of Husayn was already on a pole, and the good Christian who attempted to intercede on Husayn's behalf was seated on a chair, dressed in safari khaki and shorts, pith helmet, with binoculars, watching the events. The climax of the play came first with Shemr killing 'Ali Akbar: the lad would fall off his horse and roll in the dust as Shemr cut off his head, while Husayn stood by and cried or feigned crying. (Both actual and pretend tears were regarded as having merit.) Finally, Shemr would kill Husayn, and everyone would rush into the middle, beating their heads in grief.

Afterwards people rushed to eat the special wheat stews *(ash-e gandom)* that were cooked in massive cauldrons. These communal meals were supplied either from perpetual endowments, vows made during the year, or by richer villagers. They usually contained the meat of a freshly slaughtered lamb. I remember with amusement scenes of people eating stew communally off big trays, jockeying to make sure they were sitting next to someone relatively clean with whom to share their dipping.

Such communal meals were also important during the holy month of Ramadan (during which Muslims are enjoined to fast from dawn to dusk). In Ramadan one received double merit for good deeds. The rich paid their debts to God by cooking cauldrons of stew to distribute, sharing the meat of a slaughtered lamb, and sending gifts of dry provisions (e.g., rice) to their neighbors. My grandfather served in his day as the village timekeeper: he was one of the first in the village to have a pocket watch, and just before dawn he would sing hymns of praise *(monajat)* to the First Imam to waken people. Traditionally villagers would start their fast with the rooster's crow. The first pocket watches did not change things much, since people only could tell time when the two hands came together at noon and midnight. Thus watches were called *zohr-kuk* and *qurur-kuk* (crow of noon, crow of midnight). Just before dawn my grandfather would sing out the formula *abast o teriak* (only time for a "sip of water and a pull of opium"). It is said that my father's father (he died before I was born) would often substitute the phrase *kaseye tut-i khoshk o kuzeh ab* (only time for a "bowl of dried mulberries"—the main produce of our village—"and a jug of water"). Then he would conclude with *tanbal kahnha ya allah* ("Get up you lazy bums!"). After he died, this role was taken over first by Amu 'Ali (Uncle 'Ali), of whom it is said, the first time he saw a radio, he recited the *shahadah*, the credo of Islam, and in mock surprise he exclaimed, "So here is the proof of what the preachers say, that at the end of time people can hear each other no matter what the distance." (Radios were enormously popular, and after the first one came to the village, everyone else immediately had to have one.) Then Akbar-i Ramazan took over the role of calling people to the fast: he eventually became the father-in-law of my father, when my father took a second wife after the death of my mother.

I did not get to Hafiz with the *mullah* Monavvar. I got through the Qur'an, at which point I celebrated my first *noql kardan*, a ceremony in which sweets and coins and nuts mixed together would be sprinkled over the young scholars head, which other children could scramble for; and there would be a gift for the scholar. I remember with some embarrassment that my mother wanted to do the ceremony, but we were so poor that she could only afford the *noql* and not a gift. I knew the situation, and so I also scrambled for the *noql* and coins, probably to the dismay of my mother.

When I was five we spent the winter in the city

(Yazd), and I was sent to a pious woman *mullah* to learn the Qur'an. In the Yazd area, *mullah* is the proper term for one who teaches the rudiments of literacy. (Hence Jews were often addressed with the title *mullah*, because they were almost universally literate.) Her name was Monavvar, and she had about ten students, each at a different level. While teaching, she also made bags for a henna company, and we sometimes helped. She taught me the alphabet and the reading of the first surah of the Qur'an. I already knew much of the Qur'an by heart because my mother was a *hafez* and she often recited parts of it. It was a tradition to have a celebration (*noql kardan*) when students finished the first surah; the first, second, and eighth *joz* (thirtieths) of the Qur'an; and of course when they finished the whole Qur'an, at which time they were assumed to have acquired literacy in Arabic. In addition to the round sugar balls mixed with nuts and coins that were sprinkled over the scholar's head and the gift for the scholar, the teacher also would be given gifts relative to the family status of the child.

Following memorization of the Qur'an, students went on to the Persian poet Hafiz as an introduction to Persian literacy. Various things might follow Hafiz: the *Masnavi* of Jalai al-Din Rumi was particularly popular. All of this was just reading, not writing. My older sisters learned the Qur'an and Hafiz this way. They can no longer really read, but they can open Hafiz and "read" the familiar verses they have half memorized. Such literacy was referred to as *siahi ba sefidi farq gozashtan* (knowing black from white, that is, the print from the page). This is the connection between the Persian term for literacy, *savad*, and the Arabic word for black, *sud*.

Following the celebration, we went back to the village, where I was sent to another *mullah*, an old shroud weaver. Despite the high infant mortality rate, there was barely enough work for her to make a living making shrouds, so she also taught the Qur'an. Each student had a little carpet or goatskin on which to sit, which we kept at her house. Going to this *mullah* could be terrifying, for she would threaten to send us to the *surakh-i mar-mush khaneh* (the snake-mouse hole, namely, the dark basement, which was particularly scary in a village mud house perpetually falling into ruins), or she might use her knitting needle to draw blood from the back of our hands or she might bastinado (flog) the bottoms of our feet if we did not do our lessons properly. I did not like her and soon quit.

I was placed with another *mullah*, a young widow, a weaver with long, dark hair. Her husband had died during a hunting trip, from a fall in the mountains. She had a lovely voice and would sing with the rhythm of her loom. She taught us the rules of ritual cleanliness, and the daily prayers. We were mischievous kids, and there were opportunities for mischievousness when we were sent to the river to do the ablutions for prayer.

A Bedouin Boyhood

(Isaak Diqs, *A Bedouin Boyhood*, London, England: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., New York, New York: Universe Books, pp. 44, 46, 48, 52, 1967. Reprinted by permission.)

It was just a day. It was one of those days when nothing particular happened. I got up at dawn, like most of those among whom I was living—the people of our tribe. It was early in the summer, the time of early reaping. Many people had begun the harvest about two weeks before. Lentils and barley had to be reaped before wheat, because they ripened before the latter. These two kinds of plants lose much of their fruit if they are left for a long time after ripening. Thus it was their turn.

At that time of the year many agricultural labourers used to come in from the surrounding villages. In course of time they grew acquainted with the people and established a kind of friendship with our tribe. Some of these labourers brought their wives with them, though most of these women did not work, except to help in light tasks like preparing food or water. Occasionally they helped in collecting the reapers' small heaps and putting them on the stack. In spite of doing no hard job they were paid as much as their husbands.

It was early in the summer, a few days after the beginning of our summer vacation as small boys at the tribe's elementary school, when I followed the group of people along the Sultani road. Some of the people were on foot, while others were riding animals—donkeys, camels and horses. There was some shouting: a man was calling his son to fetch something they had forgotten to bring with them, a shepherd was asking his friend where he would go that day, or a small child was trying to follow his parents while an old woman, perhaps the grandmother, was trying to restrain him.

I found it a good opportunity that day to ask my father to let me go to my grandfather's field. I waited till he came out of the *Shik*, mounted his black horse and came along the Sultani road. As he came near me he said, "What are you waiting for? Come! Give me your hand to ride pillion." He stopped the horse, but I did not give him my hand.

"I want to go to my grandfather's field," I said.

He laughed as he leant, trying to catch me by the hand, and said, "Give me your hand and I'll drop you at the cross-roads."

I rode behind him. Along the road he began to ask me some mathematical questions; I answered most of them. Then he asked me to recite the lines of verse that he taught me and Hassan, and which later he taught to all my younger brothers:

Knowledge raises tents without poles,
While ignorance destroys high palaces.
The written word stays many years after
The writer, who will decay underground.

On both sides of the road there were fields. Most of them were ripe, while a few were still green because they had been sown later. They appeared as small green squares among the broad, yellow fields, but I could still see some green parts, because we could cut the wheatears there, roast them in the fire, blow away their husks, then eat the pleasant-tasting, roasted grain. We did that often, and we enjoyed it most on Thursdays in the afternoon, when we used to leave school earlier than usual.

When I came up one of the hills I saw Zinad. There were many people and many animals, too. From a far distance there was a kind of confusion. I could not distinguish the varieties of the animals. Camels were mixed with cows, and cows with sheep. But, the closer I came, the clearer I saw the animals and the people. Zinad was a big field to the left of the Sultani road. It had the greatest number of harvesters in the surrounding area. It stretched over a wide plain and covered two hills which were in its eastern part. The people now were in the part near the road. The reaping had begun a few days before, and still the reapers were not far from the road. They were still far from the hills.

As I came nearer I could see the long line of reapers and I could hear their singing coming above the other noise made by the crowd of people and animals. They were singing enthusiastically. Behind them were the cow-herds and shepherds moving in front of their beasts to keep them away from the heaps of corn or the unreaped parts.

I reached there, and soon I was part of that great crowd. I had nothing to do, so I went here and there. I saw now that the sheep were apart and also the cows. In front of the sheep I saw Salem, my grandfather's shepherd. He was leaning on his stick in front of his animals. Sometimes he raised himself and threw a small stone in front of a sheep trying to go through the small heaps behind the harvesters. He was mostly annoyed by the lambs, which were not as calm as their mothers. There were two other shepherds not far from Salem. They were more active than Salem. Both of them were moving lightly in front of their animals.

I passed among the small heaps. There were some women collecting these and carrying them to the stack. Thahab, a young village girl, was with them. She was the sister of Matar, one of the reapers. She could easily be distinguished, not only by her face, but also by her fair skin and green eyes. As I saw her I remembered what my grandmother used to tell us about a man called Jomaa, who was fond of having fun with the girls, especially the villagers.

Then I left the women collecting the sheaves and went to the reapers, who were busy on their work. I saw Taleb, my uncle, who was the last one on the right. I knew that the cleverest reaper should be in that part where the corn was still standing. He was working as a guide for the whole line of reapers. He could widen or shorten the cut. He also had to keep the line straight. He also led the singing.

I ran and took a place near the reaper who was on the left and began to repeat the song with them. If I had known the fatigue that reapers met, then I would have realized what these words must have meant to old Hammad who was near me. Every now and then the man who was near Hammad helped him by reaping a part of the crop in front of the old man. I saw that some men were competing, each one trying to surpass the other. I myself tried to compete with Hammad, so I took a very small line and began to cut the plants. I overtook Hammad, who had not changed the routine of his work. But, as I looked backward, I saw that Hammad was re-reaping the part that I had reaped.

"The schoolboys are good reapers today," he said. "How do you find harvesting, boy?"

"Better than school, grandfather," I answered. At that time I really felt that anything was better than going to school and staying for about eight hours, taught by one teacher.

Hammad, my neighbour, hearing my answer, turned towards me, shook his head, and smiled. My grandfather seemed unconvinced, too, because he said, "Ask Hammad which is better." Then he left, going round the unreaped part; he did not go into it as his horse had done.

When we finished, he drove towards the tents to fetch the food for the harvesters. The tents were silent, except for a few cockcrows. The cart stopped in front of my grandfather's tent. There was no one in the *Shik*, apart from two dogs lying asleep in the righthand corner. In the women's part my grandmother was shaking the milk in its goatskin bag. It seemed as if she were at the end of her job, because soon she stopped shaking. Then, after getting the butter out, she gestured to Shehdi to take the food. Then she put the milk-bag in the cart. I did not go to our tent, for fear that my mother would make me carry the food for the reapers. After having drunk water, we left the tents.

Half an hour after the meal, the work began again. It became harder as the sun grew hotter. The shepherds and cow-herds began to leave for Wadi Al-Hisi to water their animals. After a while the animals were in one long line going northwards to the Wadi.

It was about two o'clock when it was the time for leaving. The reapers left before the shepherds and cow-herds returned. As we were leaving for home and before we went far, I saw the groups of blue pigeons hovering over our heads, then coming down in the newly reaped area, the place which we had just left.

Yes, it was just one of those days of my boyhood when nothing in particular happened. It was one of the golden links in the golden chain which bound me to my people, and to our land, and us all to our way of living.

The chain now is stretched. Its links have been passed rapidly through many fingers, much as we pass our beads up and down, round and about, as we sit and finger, or count out our luck, or from time to time put up a prayer. My chain has been stretched, wrung in the many hands of men, slipped through the fingers of God. It is no longer the shining, fresh gold which I knew as a boy...But it still is my treasure, and today my solace. And perhaps it still is my only hope.

Lives in an Iranian Village
The Women of Deh Koh

(Erika Friedl, *Lives in an Iranian Village: The Women of Deh Koh*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989, pp.26-32, 34-46, 161-6, 168-70, 172-3. Reprinted by permission.)

Like many of the twenty-odd thousand villages in Iran, Deh Koh has grown rapidly and steadily over the last fifty years. The one story houses of rocks, oak beams, and mud of the handful of original settlers, built close together for reasons of terrain and defense, have grown sideways and up the rocky slope into crowded, two story adobe compounds as sons have taken wives and as herds and children have multiplied. Within the tumbled village no space is unoccupied, no matter how small, crooked, or seemingly inaccessible. A maze of alleys, tunnels, and stairways between adjacent compounds intersects the cramped village huddled against the flanks of the mountain. Vineyards are planted on the steep and sunny slopes above the village, and higher up still the pastures begin. In the hills on both sides orchards alternate with small fields among glittering irrigation channels lined with poplar trees; these tree-studded hills pan out into larger fields that curve down to the stream dividing Deh Koh land from the neighboring village.

For men and boys, who had the run of the village by virtue of their gender (and even were encouraged to be out—a man or boy who preferred sitting at home to sharing the company of others in the open fields or in the village lanes was labeled a sissy), the house and the verandah were places of rest and of the chores of upkeep, such as squeezing the excess water out of the flat roof during a rain to prevent it from seeping through the ceiling, or clearing the snow off for the same reasons. On the verandah, men ate and drank and waited for night to fall; one entertained a guest there or talked over the affairs of the day. For the women and girls the verandah was the place to live one's life, no less, within the confines of a horizon marked by the distant blue hills beyond the ochre haze of Deh Koh and the watchful eyes of the other women in one's own courtyard, and the next, and the one above. The fact that a woman was hardly ever alone was reassuring for matters of security, but it was a heavy emotional burden nevertheless. Indeed, it was said, nothing made brothers split up faster than their wives fighting each other at home.

Khorshid's father had started his own courtyard with a small barn and one room above in the back of his father's north wall, through which a tunnel provided passage between the two yards. To the east the corner of a cousin's house together with a short wall connecting this corner with the western front corner of another relative's house provided a safeguard against trespassers, and the back wall allowed for adding more barns and living rooms. To the north there was a little open space with two walnut trees and another wall beyond, running at a southwestern angle, forming a narrow alley along Khorshid's father's wall. This alley opened into one of the main lanes—hardly wide enough for two donkeys passing each other—along an arm of the water channel. In fact, the alley was blocked by an old willow tree, and after regularly cursing it twice a day whenever the sheep and goats would balk at squeezing by it, Khorshid's father finally felled it and made of it a sturdy bridge over the channel.

Khorshid's father had three sons, all of whom built next to him, filling the many-angled space with three barns and living rooms, each at slightly different planes from the other, so that the respective verandahs were not quite level and had to be connected by steps of varying height. Khorshid and his brothers and all their wives proved amiable enough not to split up as long as they lived. Khorshid's first wife died young and childless. His second wife, Maryam—a cousin who had lived in a room backing Khorshid's and only had to move through the tunnel and up Khorshid's stairway into her new home when she got married—was much younger than Khorshid and bore only one child, who died. Khorshid's two other brothers, both older than he, each had two sons who survived a whooping-cough epidemic that had killed a quarter of the young children one winter. The four sons eventually cut down the walnut trees, starting a dispute over ownership that lasted into the next generation, and built this space up to the north wall, adding slanted verandahs and crooked stairways. At one time fifteen adults and twelve children were living in the compound together with some eighty sheep and goats, five cows, six donkeys, and about three dozen chickens, on a piece of land measuring about sixty by seventy feet.

Maryam, by far the youngest of the older generation, and by far the brightest and most energetic of all the women in the courtyard, had been the dominant figure even while her mother-in-law, too old and worn out to be of much use or importance, was still alive. Backed by her brothers in the adjacent compound, and just as alert and assertive as they were, she had diminished her handicap of lack of children very cleverly. She built up her position of power by the sheer dominance of her personality and the clever manipulation of her brothers and cousins. None of the younger women ever brought up the topic in her presence, no matter how tempted they surely felt to do so during the infrequent but high-pitched arguments with her. Maryam was strong in will and body. While the other women around her withered quickly into middle age, depleted from childbearing and child rearing, malnourished and anemic, only too glad to delegate work and responsibilities to their daughters, daughters-in-law and sons, Maryam stood straight backed, small, with head held high, and her quick, dark eyes watched her own and Khorshid's interests with undivided alertness. While Khorshid's brothers' land, equal to Khorshid's in size, was too little for the mouths it was supposed to feed, Khorshid's was yielding a surplus. Paying some relatives with his wheat, he had planted one of the finest vineyards in the village with their help and later, when the Shah's government provided apple trees, one of the largest orchards. He was in partnerships—organized by Maryam—with a great many of his poorer relatives, providing land and water against their good labor and successfully keeping a watchful eye on their honesty. Although neither was generous by nature, Maryam realized very early that acts of largesse on their part yielded far more than their initial cost in the compensations to come. Maryam was the mastermind behind all their successful endeavors, and Khorshid and everybody else knew it.

After Khorshid died Maryam had to make some choices. Customarily at her age her sons would have taken care of her, but she had no sons. If she were younger, one of Khorshid's brothers would have to take her on as a second wife. But Khorshid's brothers were dead anyway. One possibility was to go and live with her brothers, but this Maryam found unappealing. By now two of her three brothers had moved out of their old courtyard, and she would have had to make a choice among the three of them and their wives. For Maryam it would have meant moving from a position of dominance and control into one of subordination—becoming, in her eyes, a tenant. She did not want to be a tenant for any of her sisters-in-law. And there was yet another possibility: remarriage.

Maryam considered it realistically. Her age, she knew, was not a problem in itself. Although older in years than her wrinkled sisters with their grownup children around them, Maryam looked and felt much younger. There was not a gray hair under her scarf; her arms were round, her breasts firm; and she could climb stairs without wheezing. She had been around a long time, yet she was not old. There were several middle-aged widowers in the village, a couple of them even eligible relatives. But perceptive as she was, she appreciated their problems very well. For a man who still wanted children she was a bad risk, even if there was a tacit understanding that her barrenness probably had been due to Khorshid's inadequacy and not hers. For a man with grown sons on the other hand, she was not old enough; there was still just a chance that she might have children, which would obviously not be in the interest of the older children. Against the opposition of his sons an older man had little chance to take a youngish wife. Also, there was the matter of Khorshid's property. She was certain that as long as she had her strength and faculties none of her husband's nephews would press her to relinquish what, by rights, could be seen as their due inheritance. In any case she would fight back ably, and they knew it. But if she were to get married again she would either have to sell whatever she could (which undoubtedly would cause bad fights she did not particularly care for), only to have to give the money to her new husband, or else the vineyards and orchards and the fields of wheat and clover would be claimed successfully by Khorshid's nephews, especially those who already had worked the land for many years. She would be mistress in a new house again instead of a widow living all by herself, but the price was very high. Maryam decided on the last choice, namely, to wait and see, and to hold onto the bird in hand.

But fate overtook her in other ways. In the back of her compound all her brothers had moved out into new houses at the outskirts of the village in opposite directions. Gone were the days of just slipping through the tunnel for a quick chat, counsel, news, to borrow or lend something, to keep up. Never too fond of her, and too conscious of their own importance to compromise it by walking through the village and paying her an official visit, her sisters-in-law stayed home, just as Maryam did for the same reasons. (Her youngest nephew's wife she did not see for almost two years after the move.) Half of her own father's courtyard fell to ruin, and the other half was transiently occupied by newlywed nephews and cousins' children before they had enough money to build their own houses elsewhere. The tunnel collapsed. To go to her father's old courtyard now Maryam had to climb two ladders over a high roof. It was not worth the effort. But in her own courtyard the same exodus happened. Both of Khorshid's remaining nephews (her own cousins' sons as well) started to make sun-baked bricks of mud and straw, and cement blocks. They could not afford the heavy stone and cement structures of the *nouveau riche* like their younger brother who had worked in Kuwait, but their own savings allowed them to put up at least a traditional house, modified and enlarged to include a separate kitchen and a "good" room, surrounded by its own private wall. Illiterate and unskilled as they were, the economic stagnation following the revolution had diminished their opportunities for outside work during the agricultural off-season. Money was very scarce and building material was expensive and in short supply, but the prevailing feeling was nevertheless to build now rather than later, because there might not be much of a later.

Within a few months Maryam had the courtyard to herself. The far northern rooms had been taken down by their owner so he could use the old poplar beams for the roof of his new house. His own few poplar trees around one of his gardens were not thick enough yet for the purpose, and, like so much else, lumber was priced beyond his means. For a while the second nephew still used his barns for his two donkeys and hay, and his old living quarters to store wheat behind heavy padlocks until he could build stables in his new courtyard. But except for his infrequent short stops for the first time in her life Maryam was totally alone.

Maryam found herself not only alone in a lot of empty space but also with a lot of empty time on hand. Until a few years back Maryam could have taken her spindle and joined the other women on one of her neighbors' porches, keeping busy while visiting, any time. But she had no more fleece to spin. Her sheep were long gone, as were her nephews' sheep—sold, most of them. Her two rooms were immaculate and stayed so day after day. Once she had swept the yard below, it stayed clean. Cleaning the handful of rice for her evening meal was a matter of minutes. The bread she baked lasted and lasted. Lately, young women had taken up needlework. Indeed, her niece Golgol could draw a wonderful pattern of flowers and vases onto a piece of white fabric—the girls in school all had her do it—but Maryam, almost an old woman by any standard, felt she could not very well amuse herself with a pastime of the young. Her routine chores, a little mending and sewing, and her waterpipe were all she had to fill the long hours of the day.

In a corner of the deserted courtyard Maryam planted a few cucumbers and tomatoes and the pits of some peaches and sunflowers. Although the sparrows got most of the seeds, a little garden was sprouting—green, easy on her eyes, a patch of life, and one more good reason to haul water from the water faucet. The nephew, however, was fidgety when he saw the little plants. "Not that I want to suggest anything, Aunt Maryam," he said. "No harm done, for sure, by holy Abbas, but just to keep the record straight: this is my land, it was my barn that stood here, and my house, all along here to the corner over there, and you know it. No, don't say anything, don't fret, just eat your cucumbers, God bless them, but I just want to say that maybe one of my sons will want to come back up here one day, one never knows, and this is our land, not yours, not my brothers, not Uncle Khorshid's, as you know."

All this happened over one long summer and fall. Maryam bought a small kerosene heater and a gas cooking burner to avoid most of the cumbersome necessity of getting firewood. Long before the first rains of early winter, with the help of Perijan's son she had her own two rooms waterproofed by spreading tar-soaked sacking on the flat roof. This did away with having to climb up onto the roof during a rain to press the water out of the soaked earth with a heavy oak roller so that the rain wouldn't seep through the roof. As this was a man's job and the oak roller was heavy, the chore had been one of her brothers' more powerful arguments against her staying in her house alone. She paid for this job herself, and none of her brothers could say anything. The verandah, as important a space to live in as her rooms, she could take care of herself; it was not as big as the roof and was right outside her door.

But her two nephews' barns and storage rooms adjacent to hers, unprotected and uncared for, started to melt and crumble under the heavy rains and the snow of that winter. In her own interest Maryam urged and argued that the men attend to their property, but to no avail. Instead, when the first warm and dry breezes of spring blew in from the south, one morning the two men and three of their sons, without any warning that would have given Maryam time to prevent them, stood there with their pickaxes and shovels and started to take the buildings down to get to the beams. There was nothing Maryam could do. The houses were theirs to do with as they pleased; so were the barns underneath. She gathered all her belongings from the porch and locked them into her rooms to get them out of the dust, and then climbed onto her roof to escape the clouds of dust enveloping the scene of destruction. Her house would stand alone now, surrounded by rubble, leaning against the back wall of the house still standing in her brothers' old courtyard. It was not considerate of the nephews to claim those beams now—in a few years she would be dead anyway—but beams were good money. She knew this all too well. Annoying as the affair was, it was not alarming, she thought.

Maryam was in for a surprise. The settling dust revealed a catastrophe: Maryam, perched on her roof with her headscarf drawn half across her face, looked down not onto her verandah but into an abyss. The roofs of the barns that had formed part of her porch had overlapped, and with the collapse of the supporting barn structures almost all of her verandah had been ripped off. Her fireplace was gone; so was the little branch hut shading the water containers and the edge jutting out far enough to give her a lookout into the alley. Her stairway leading up from the alley was broken, one-half gone, the other hanging crookedly and raggedly on the remainder of its support of branches and short beams. To get down from her rooms to level ground Maryam would have to climb onto her roof—where she now sat, rigid with consternation—then up another ladder onto her brother's higher roof, and from there down into their courtyard and out another alley and through a half-tumbled tunnel to the road.

Maryam was perched high up on dusty beams with nowhere to go.

"People, come here," she shouted, louder still, to the figures emerging on the rooftops around her. "People, God is my witness, my own relatives, my own cousin's sons are robbing me, are violating my rights!"

Meanwhile her younger nephew, Faraj, and two of the boys had heaved themselves up onto what was left of the porch, balancing precariously on the wobbly beams, and were gesticulating with great animation up to Maryam. "Be quiet," they bellowed. "Come down, shut up, no one is harming you, do you understand? Shut up!" And then the younger nephew scuttled up the ladder to her and grabbed her. "We'll repair it," he said, to no one in particular, but loud enough for all the neighbors to hear. "It was an accident; we will get it together right away; come down and tell us what you want. We didn't mean any harm, we will set it right right away." At this public proclamation Maryam let herself be persuaded to climb down, which was not without danger, since the ladder was very close to the sagging edge of the mutilated verandah.

As long as there was light enough they were as good as their word. While the boys shored up the pitiable rest of the porch with beams they dug out of the adobe ruins, the two older men tried to restore the stairs to at least temporary usefulness. But night was falling fast, and they had neither hammers nor nails with them. "Don't fall," they said to Maryam when they left. "Be careful, don't go down without a lantern. We will be back tomorrow and do it right."

"What about the porch?" Maryam asked with justified suspicion.

"The porch too, of course," said the older nephew, "by holy Abbas."

"Yes, yes," said Maryam, "Saint Abbas is a very busy man with you. Don't trouble him, just come yourself."

In the evening, an hour or so before it would be dark, Ezad, his long, skinny frame stooping after a long day's labor, came with his son and his tools. They were annoyed when they saw that no one from the other party had shown up, and Ezad sent his son to fetch at least the young cousins. This took another good while, which Ezad and Maryam used to argue about what should be done. She said she needed the outhouse dug out and repaired, and she needed her own barn back in usable shape, all of it, and the verandah rebuilt, and the stairs fixed. Ezad reduced these demands to their more essential meaning: Maryam needed some sort of outhouse, some porch (which automatically would provide a woodshed underneath), and some sort of stairs. Even scaled down the restoration would be a lot of work they could ill afford now. The boys would have to salvage adobe bricks; old beams would have to be cut to size; and the sump of the outhouse was probably filled with debris and would have to be emptied. "The black death," Ezad said over and over, with great feeling, by way of a curse.

That evening after the party finally had assembled (minus Faraj, who had sprained an ankle), the boys stacked a small pile of reusable bricks and Ezad shored up the stairs a little more, and together they cleared a path to the barn below Maryam's house so that she could use the barn as an outhouse, they said. Maryam refused to use it, though, not so much for hygienic reasons (in the past barns were used as toilets) but because she suspected that once she started using it the restoration of her outhouse would lose urgency and she might end up having none for good. Instead, ostentatiously swinging the long-spouted water can used for the necessary ablutions and stopping to exchange words here and there with passersby, she would slowly walk around to her brother's dilapidated outhouse or to that of Begom and Akbar, her neighbors across the lane, which was, however, rather dirty and not much better than the barns of old.

After a week or so, Maryam had become rather dexterous in hauling pails of water up and down the ladder, wide skirts notwithstanding. She had baked bread indoors, which was very hot and uncomfortable, and had watched, practically from her doorsill, the few half-hearted attempts of the boys and the nephews to tackle the job. The progress was nil.

Midmorning right after the first slight rain, which had flushed holes out of the remainder of her unprotected and unprotectable porch, she dressed herself in a black skirt, took a black veil out of her bundle of clothes, pulled her hair out to give herself a disheveled look, took in a deep breath and let out a scream that lasted until she was in the main alley. By then she had an audience lined up on verandahs and in doorways. Recounting at the top of her lungs in telegraphic simplicity the highlights of the insults and broken promises of her relatives, without mentioning names, she stormed down through the village towards the main crossroads, shouting her intention to go to the police to complain publicly and without reservations—she, an old woman, who was being done in by her own family.

By the time Kerim arrived at the spectacle in the village's main crossroads Maryam had worked herself into a fine state of fury. She was disheveled, her hair had long escaped the scarf, the veil had fallen to her shoulders, and she was trembling as she screamed her protests and violently announced her firm intention to complain to the police, the revolutionary guards, the governor, the Imam Khomeini himself, about the injustice she suffered from her own kinsmen. A few of the men, beholden to Kerim by kinship or other allegiances, had blocked her progress towards the police further down the road, but Maryam had reckoned on this, indeed had hoped for it. She had no intention of lodging an official complaint, which would have brought disgrace on all her family, including herself, and would have alienated them from her. She had counted on the matter being resolved right there in the square. However, at this point she was ruled by genuine fury and it was just as well that these men were there to restrain her until one of her brothers would deal with her. Kerim and his son-in-law pounced on her and held her firmly, calming her down with assurances that they would set everything right, with explanations to the spectators, with curses on Faraj and Ezad (four of their children were in the crowd), with solemn oaths that Kerim personally would see to the restoration of her house, with pleas to the more esteemed among the bystanders to bear witness to the promises. In the end, Maryam let herself be led away to her sister Perijan's house, which was the closest to the scene, where she was given tea and showered with soothing noises of sympathy.

Maryam spent the night there. Kerim routed out Faraj and Ezad and hired a young lad to work full time on the outhouse and the barn walls. He decided on the size of the porch and how it would be supported, and he himself, together with his and Maryam's youngest brother, built a new staircase, much narrower than the old one had been but with real cement holding together the flat rocks. The job was done within two days. Maryam was not entirely happy with the small porch but knew better than to complain. She built herself a new fireplace in one corner, a semicircle of a mud wall some fifteen inches high, which would support the convex iron griddle on which the flatbreads were baked, and she even built herself a little henhouse with the mud that now was so abundantly heaped up in the courtyard. She had enough grain to feed a few chickens. For the time being she was content. Her brothers were mad at her, just as a father would be angry with a misbehaving child, but she knew that their wives were relieved and that, therefore, their anger would dissipate quickly. She had come so perilously close to losing her porch and her house and, with them, her independence, that now she felt almost elated, looking down over her cucumbers and out towards the street from her quiet perch, her small window to the shrunken world. Listening to the gurgling of her waterpipe, to the faint noises of distant life, she watched the slow hours of the day pass from dusk to sun to shadows, one after the other, lined up like the beads around her neck. As long as God would give her the use of her limbs, a little food for her belly, and enough strength in her bones to move, she would say, "Thanks be to God" a thousand times a day.

Friday Prayers to Video Nights

(Kayaton Ghazi, *The New York Times*, February 18, 1995, © 1995 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.)

GHASSEM-ABAD, Iran—Ten years ago, when the Ministry of Reconstruction dug several deep wells in this farming village of 140 people on the edge of Iran's central desert, Khalil Foadian saw it as a blessing. But now that the Government has also brought in electricity, running water, a clinic, a high school and a paved road to the nearby city of Damghan, he is having doubts.

"Television has ruined our lives," said the 80-year-old Mr. Foadian who wears the traditional camelskin *abaya*, or cloak. "The young people all want to live like rich folks in Teheran. They don't consider it sinful not to go to the mosque. Unfortunately, everything now revolves around money."

Leaders of the 1979 Islamic revolution pledged to help the poor. But the Government's work to improve life in the countryside has also reshaped aspirations, sowing cynicism about religion and creating a growing appetite for a middle-class life style.

In the last 15 years, the Reconstruction Ministry, which is charged with "the expansion of social justice in village communities," has built 30,000 miles of paved roads, 40,000 schools and 7,000 libraries, and has provided electricity and running water to more than half of Iran's 50,000 villages.

"The former Shah's rule was legitimized as the modernization of Iran, but the notions of modernity were introduced from the top, through aristocratic and wealthy families," said Faraj Sarkoohi, editor of the cultural magazine Adineh.

"The Islamic state tries to govern through enforcing traditional values, like the dress code for women and a preindustrial-age set of codes, but has introduced elements of modernity from the bottom—in rural Iran. Now, the contradictions are striking."

Fifteen years ago, Mr. Foadian had to walk three miles for drinking water. Today, his 35-year-old nephew Mohammed, proudly shows off his pickup truck, refrigerator, color television and a pocket calculator. Mohammed's brothers make butter by pouring milk into their Japanese made top-loading washing machine. The exposure to television has led them to question official propaganda.

"People are resentful and angry over inflation," said Mohammed Foadian. "But the religious leaders only tell us to be patient and virtuous. Until three years ago, I did not know Iran had oil. Now, I want to know what the Government does with the money. Truth is a virtue."

Despite the emphasis on rural development, migration to the cities has increased Iran's urban population by 40 percent since 1978. Driving the migration is a decline in the number of agricultural jobs resulting from industrial development and the lure of city life. After the chronic shortages of the 1980-88 war with Iraq, the Government tried to placate the public by filling the stores with consumer goods—importing $4 billion in Japanese and Korean cars in 1991, for example. Recently, though, it has come under fierce criticism from Islamic hard-liners in Parliament for importing "unnecessary luxury items."

During the 1979 Islamic revolution, said Sayed Leilaz, a columnist for the semi-official newspaper Hamshahri, "Iranian cinema was attacked by the revolutionaries as the instrument of perpetrating Western values.

"Now, many people watch pirated American films on their VCR's," he said. "If 20 years ago, the average urban family's fantasy was to go on pilgrimage to Meshed, now that fantasy is to go to Los Angeles to visit relatives."

Other tensions are evident between religious structures and the pressure for change. For example, although charging interest is forbidden under Islamic law, Iranian banks offer "profit" on long-term deposits, at high rates. The state promotes simple living, yet many highranking officials live in opulent residences expropriated from the pre-revolutionary elite. While political clerics routinely deride the West, junior officials are sent to universities in Canada, Britain and the United States.

But some figures in the religious community contend that the biggest contradiction is posed by the political role of Islamic clerics. A number of theologians and Islamic intellectuals contend that the clerics should return to being exclusively spiritual leaders.

"The economy is the work of economists," Abdul Karim Soroush, a leading revolutionary theoretician, said recently. "The business of religion should be strictly religion."

Growing economic problems in Iran has also stirred some disenchantment with the Islamic revolution itself and led people to become more preoccupied with meeting their daily needs. Fewer Iranians have been turning out for the country's political-religious events. Analysts say participation at mosques, which served as centers for organizing the revolutionary movement in the 1970's, has dropped because prayer ceremonies became outlets for the Government to spread its message.

Few young people in Ghassem-Abad say they attend Friday Prayers.

"People are much better informed, politically and socially," said Zahra Sadeghi, a teacher of religious studies from another small village, Allah-Abad. "Television, radio and newspapers have helped this trend. Sending their children to the university is now more important to them than prayer and fasting."

Om Gad: Wife of the Garagekeeper

(Nayra Atiya, *Khul Khaal: Five Egyptian Women Tell Their Stories*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1982, pp. 1, 2, 5-9, 17-8, 20-24, 26-7. Reprinted by permission.)

I was born in a village in Giza. Our roots run deep in that village, and we have no other village that we call our own. The lives of my father, my father's father, and his father before him ran their course within the confines of that village. So when we emerged, we found ourselves part of that village and none other.

When I awoke then I found myself to be an only child. My father had been married once to his paternal aunt's daughter, the daughter of his father's sister. She had borne him three daughters. All died. None remained. This was before I was born. His first wife died, and he married my mother.

My mother bore him eight children. They were three boys and five girls. None of these died young. Some were six years old and others seven when they died. They would suddenly disappear without illness or warning of any kind.

When my mother became pregnant with me, fearing the same fate for me as for these other children, she went to a wise man to ask advice. Sheikh Ali, the one who knows, lived in a village nearby.

He said to her, "When you give birth make sure you have on hand a black-colored duck with no markings on its body. When the child is born, have a basin ready into which you'll catch everything which comes out of you. Don't let any part come outside it or let the afterbirth touch the ground." Then he told her that the duck should be slaughtered, plucked, and cooked whole, with not a bone in its body broken. He said to her, "After giving birth you must set yourself to eating this bird without breaking the bones. Pick it clean, and when the carcass is bare and looking like an altar of bones, get a meter of white cloth, *farta beyda*, and place the blood and afterbirth and the duck's carcass in it. Add a piece of bread and some salt, tie up the sheet with a firm knot, then dig a deep hole beside your house, at the roots of the house, and bury the lot there. The child will then survive."

Although life and death are in the hands of God, and it is he who moves mountains, my mother did as she was told and I survived. I lived.

I was engaged to my paternal uncle's son. As I was an only child and my husband had only one sister, we felt quite alone in the world. My cousin was determined to fortify the link between our families by marrying me. He said, "I shall marry her, and be at once her husband and her brother."

He spoke to my father, and my father said to him, "My son, she is your first cousin, and come what may you have priority above anyone else. You are a brother to her."

As my father's house had only my parents living in it, it seemed empty with all the children dead and gone. My parents were companionless, and so my father said to Omar, "My boy, this is your home. You have a place in it, and you shall have your own room." So it came to pass. I was thirteen and had neither breasts nor had my period come yet. My period came eight months after I was married. Right after, my first child, a daughter, was born. This is the one we call Fatma, Om Reda.

I had another girl after this one. She refused to nurse. She turned away from the breast, and when I tried to bottle feed her, she died. She was six months old.

Another daughter was born later. She is now a clerk in one of the ministries. After her we had a son, Mohammad, who died when he was eight months old. He was also given the evil eye. We seem fated that way in our family. My father had not died then. No sooner had we gone to the cemetery for my father than the boy got fever. The sun didn't rise on him before he was dead. Our mourning was doubled.

We had to go on living. My mother was alone, and I was an only child and the only support left her. Could I leave my mother then in the care of her brother's son or daughter? It wouldn't do. She was our responsibility. I said to her, "Consider that we are in my father's house and that we rent rooms here. We carry you in our eyes." So she stayed.

Omar, my husband, had been working as a caretaker, car washer and part-time driver in garages by then. He has been in his present job twenty years, although we have lived behind that garage only five years.

I then had a daughter, Sana. When she was eight months old she had fever, and I took her to someone who gave her penicillin injections, and lo and behold: instead of recovering she became paralysed. She got polio. I stood her up on my knee one day, and suddenly her leg gave way. I was shocked. My nerves gave way. That this should happen to her, and she being a girl and a woman, I knew it would have grave consequences. No man would want to marry a cripple.

I took her to Abu Reesh Children's Hospital, and there the doctor asked me if she'd had fever and if I'd given her a penicillin injection. When I said I had, he said, "Well, my good woman, you can only put your trust in God now to heal her."

I continued to take her to hospital for physiotherapy. I took her every other day for three years. She then put her foot to the floor one day, and God had mercy on her. She walked. But she has a slight limp. We sent her to school, and she is now studying accounting.

I then gave birth to another son. I named him Ali after my father. We had by then moved to the rooms behind the garage. One day when he was about thirteen years old, during a *moosim* or a feast time, I decided to do some special cooking to take back to our relatives in the village.

I found Ali sitting more quietly than usual. I said to him, "What's the matter, little brother!" He answered, "Nothing. I just have a little cough."

He sat and shelled peas with me. His sister cooked them, and he ate as usual and went out to play with his friends. I took the food and went to the village. It was about five o'clock.

At nine o'clock I suddenly saw the boy's sister, Sana, the one who limps, coming toward me. I was alarmed and cried out to her, "What brings you at this hour!" She said, "Ali took a nap this afternoon. When he woke up he said to his grandmother, "I want to urinate." So she answered, "Get up and urinate then, my child." He started to get up, but his legs wouldn't hold him. He cried out, "Help me, Grandmother. I can't stand!" He fell in a heap on the ground, and his grandmother cried out and ran to him. The neighbors gathered. My mother cried, "Help me, help me. Look at the boy!" So they carried him and ran with him to a doctor. By the time Sana reached us in the village and his father and I got a taxi and rushed back, we found them bringing him back dead in the doctor's car.

I can't forget him. He is on my mind at all times. He was a boy like my beautiful brother who died. He was a man already. I didn't see him. His father didn't see him. He was just taken from us with no warning. That was five years ago. I was desperate. I covered myself in mud, and my sorrow burned me like fire.

His father has never recovered. He is a broken man. He continues to struggle because of the children he must raise still, but his back is broken. He's not one to show his sorrow. He holds it in, and it devours him.

This is our life, everything that happens is God's will after all. We accept it. I just hope God gives Omar time enough on this earth to place each one of our five daughters happily in some man's house.

Daughters are a serious responsibility. We have only two sons left; the eldest is Gad. Our eldest daughter married, but it turned out badly. The one she took was a poor man. I took him under my wing and built him up and set up a home for him. I did this thinking, "I'm preparing a nest for my daughter. It's enough that she be in a man's house even if he is a poor man of humble origin."

I thought that even if we had to feed them, it was enough to be able to say when the neighbors asked, "Where is your daughter going to or coming from?" "She's going to her husband's house or coming from her husband's house." But the marriage was a failure.

His parents began to plot to dispose of the furniture we had provided the couple, and the whole thing soured. She had a son, Reda, by this man. That is why we call her Om Reda.

After the boy was born, his folks worked on him saying, "Divorce her, divorce her," until he did.

She and her son, Reda, now live with us. She had this boy one year before I gave birth to another son, Saad, who is now six years old. He will be going to school next year.

When Saad was born, I had four men in the house. I was happy. They filled the house with their presence. Their comings and goings were my joy. They made me feel needed and gave me hope in the future. But soon people began their round of envious chatter. Before Saad was born, I'd had a son who died when he was one year old. "Oh, she's had another son," they would say with envy in their hearts. "Oh, she now has four men in her house." This way people began to cast the evil eye on us, and the thirteen-year-old and the baby both died.

I was heartbroken. They had given meaning to my life and provided the house with a soul. But God didn't mean for my happiness to last. The light in my heart is dim with the losses I've suffered. Even our daughter was returned to us after seven years of marriage. Unlike the other children, she didn't go to school. She's a poor creature who has nothing.

Gad didn't do well in school, so we got him a job as a messenger in a company. The army then took him, and when his three years in service are over, he'll go back to his job.

We got our other daughter a job in one of the ministries as a clerk. The youngest girl who had polio didn't get high enough marks on her exams to go on to high school, so we said to her, "Never mind, child. You see that your sister is a clerk and is content and has a job. We will find something for you to do."

Each one of the children must have an education with which to make his way in the world. We are not certain to be able to support them forever. We still have my father's house in Giza, and we have built another house there which we rent. We work hard in order to be able to leave behind us something for the children.

We have to work hard. In the last five years we came to live with Omar in the three rooms behind the garage. I've helped him with his work, although I was not accustomed to working, and he never subjected me to the hardship or vexation of a job. In fact, he kept me so well that I never even slipped out of the house to go on an errand. He really cared for me. That's the way he showed it—by keeping me home.

I used to be pretty, and I never went out. But since my son Ali died I have lost my looks, and I have to help my husband although he doesn't want me to. But what with Gad, our eldest son in the army, and Omar broken by hardship and sadness, I decided I had to help.

With us if a man cares for his wife properly, he never lets her go out or do anything. This is the real sign of his affection. It is shameful to let her out. It's different with our educated daughters of course. But I feel contented with life this way.

The owner of the building takes half of the rent paid to the garage, and we take the other half. The owner also gives us a salary of E£15 [about U.S. $25] a month.

I had three children die on me and miscarried once. I have seven children now. Seven and four, that's eleven. I'd have had eleven children if all had lived.

Our people prefer boys, because a girl's life is difficult. It's difficult in every sort of family and among all nationalities. A girl's life is not like a man's life. She has no assurance of being happy in her marriage. And her main purpose in life is to marry and to have children. A girl's and a woman's lives are a trial whatever happens. I don't know why.

Every woman wants to be happy. She wants to be happy with her man. She wants him to love and care for her. She wants him to treasure her and look after her. He shows his love in this way. If she speaks to him, he listens and takes her opinion into consideration. He trusts her. There are some men who when their wives speak will say, "Oh, don't listen to her."

This hurts a woman and shows her that for him she's no more than a statue. She's not human.

Our problem is that we are modest people with no capital. We have to work hard to make ends meet. Behind the garage we lived in two rooms first. Then we got fed up. We were cramped, and what compensation did we have for living this way! The tenants in the apartment building pay the same pound every month now [about U.S. $1.50] that they paid five years ago. For this they get their cars washed daily and guarded at night. So I went to the owner of the building and struck a bargain with her. We would stay on getting E£15 a month salary, plus what we got from each tenant if she agreed to build us an extra two rooms at her expense. She agreed.

My husband, whether he's well or not, has to get up at four in the morning daily to wash cars. He drinks his glass of tea, prays, and goes to work. I get up to help him. The children can only help us a little. They have to build their own lives. Besides, they are ashamed of this work. Our daughter especially has trouble with what her father does. She works at one of the ministries and has had a number of men come to her with offers of marriage. But the first question a young man asks now of a prospective bride is, "What does your father do?" What can she answer? "My father works as a garage attendant?" She can't. It would embarrass her. This is a generation of government employees. They have been educated. They have diplomas. They look down their noses at anyone who works with his hands.

My daughter is in an awkward position. She is in conflict because she doesn't want to have this question put to her. Her schooling is an advantage and a drawback.

Our daughter earns E£20 [about U.S. $30] a month. It's not enough to keep her. It's hardly enough to buy the clothes she needs for a working girl and the tea she buys for herself and offers her colleagues at work. We support her a little on the side. What can we do? My man struggles, and I work alongside. He can never rest. Children are a trust and a responsibility.

We finish the cars at about eight or nine on the mornings when I'm with him. The rest of the day I cook, wash, and take care of the children. Those of us who are home prepare for the ones at work. If there is washing to be done, we do it. Everyone pulls his weight. The one who drinks from a glass rinses it out. My eldest daughter washes up and tidies the place.

We have five small rooms now and a bathroom. We have a place where we put the *butagaz* stove. We cook there. We have to make do. People can wish for things, but everything is in God's hand in the end. Our daughter's husband left her seven years ago. We are bringing up her son, along with our children. He married and had a child and doesn't even ask after him or give anything for his support. What can we do?

We bought an old car this year for E£500 [about U.S. $700-800]. It belonged to one of the tenants. I paid E£400 which I got by forming a cooperative. I contributed E£20 to this cooperative. My maternal first cousin and a few trusted friends each paid E£20 to make up the rest of 400 pounds. Each month I put in E£20, as do the others. The lot goes to each one in turn. We can only make big purchases like that by forming cooperatives. These are very common among people like us because no one has ready big sums at one time. I bought the car from someone who has two cars in the garage. They pay E£5 a month for upkeep of each car. Now they keep those ten pounds to make up the remaining hundred I still owe them. I'll have my debt paid in five months.

We rent my father's house in Giza for E£9 a month. It's a mud brick house, but I haven't the means to rebuild it in fired brick. It has two rooms. We rent it to a construction worker and his wife. She works too, and on the first of each month without fail they pay the rent.

Our own house is made of brick. It has four rooms. It has tiled floors, painted walls, electricity, and water. We have stored our divorced daughter's furniture in one room. Every few days we go there to clean the furniture and stay a while. The children go there on their holidays.

We don't think of renting it because I don't know what the future holds. Supposing we leave this job? Where would we go if the house was rented? Once you have a renter, he will never leave.

This is our life. There are twelve of us. We struggle to get by. We eat bread alone for 30 piasters a day. God willing, when we can, we buy two or three kilos of meat twice a week from the government cooperative. We can't afford to pay the prices at the regular butcher's. Meat there costs twice as much as at the government stores. Along with this I buy some vegetables, some rice or macaroni which all comes to about two or three pounds a week [about U.S. $5]. We spend about ten pounds a week on food. We also take a kilo of milk a day for thirty piasters, tea for seventy-five piasters, a week, and sugar every two or three days for thirty piasters.

I thank God for everything and trust in him. But nothing I have suffered in this life affected my body and my spirit as did the death of my son. It still affects me. When he died and I saw myself completely undone, I thought I would be lost and the children lost in my wake. I made an effort and said to myself, "My girl, God give you patience." When I feel a tear crop up in my eye, I repeat to myself, "God give me patience, God give me patience." I read the opening passage in the Koran, the *Fatha*. This sustains me.

I try to cool myself down when grief consumes me. I get up at once and don't let myself stew. I go out on the street. I stay there for a while so that the devil will not get hold of my thoughts and flatten me out again. Going out on the street is like dousing a fire with water. When I am on the street I feel better. I am in the open air, and there are people about to distract me. The street is a refuge.

We have to work and to live. We have to bring up our children. My dead son was everything to me. I wanted him to live. But everything in this world is in the hands of God. We live and accept his will. Our faith in him sustains and strengthens us.

Take My Picture! Wedding Videos and Invisible Brides

(Susan Ossman, *Casablanca Picturing: Portraits of Power in a Modern City*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 169-173. Reprinted by permission.)

Zohra and Mariam smile as I sit down for tea.

"So you like to watch wedding tapes?" they ask. "Nadia told us that you like to see home videos."

"You should see the video from my wedding!" Zohra exclaims proudly.

She promptly puts it into the VCR as her sister says, "turn it to when you come in," referring to the moment when the bride makes the first of her four entrances among her guests.

"Just a minute," says Zohra. "It will come."

Zohra starts the video at the beginning. We watch the guests arrive, as well as dressed for this upper-class occasion and smiling at the cameras placed next to the entrance of the huge tent set up in the bride's parents' backyard.

"There's your Uncle Mohammed and their son Tariq," Nadia observes. "Isn't he handsome?"

"Hey, there you are, Nadia!" the girls nearly scream. "Look, you had on your orange caftan that day. It's a good color for you."

"It really was a fancy wedding," remarks Nadia. "I had a good time. Look, there are my sisters too."

The first thing one notices in this wedding, as in most wedding videos, is the parade of sparkle and brilliance passing by the camera's lens. The women, dressed in dazzling silk or satin caftans, wearing gold belts and jewelry, their hair drawn back in a chignon (hair bun) or lavishly styled, could have stepped from a fashion magazine photo. Makeup and nail polish finish the picture, and we need stretch our imaginations only a little to catch a whiff of the mingling of many perfumes. The men are less colorful, dressed in suits and ties or in *zellaleb*. As with many other weddings, a professional cameraman was hired for the occasion: indeed, some businesses specialize in wedding videos.

The camera catches the guests as they enter, then takes some shots of a band. The musicians, sitting at the side of the room, play softly at first. We hear a mixture of soft music, scattered conversation, random noise. As the guests sit down, we glimpse each group of guests. The girls watching the video discuss the qualities of those they know or inquire about those they don't. Nadia and Hakima keep mentioning one of the young men, who was killed in an automobile accident shortly after the wedding; through their comments the video becomes a postmortem tribute to him. They speak of his kindness, his intelligence, his recent marriage. They reflect on the uncertainty of destiny, referring to the young man's smiling image on the screen. When their mother enters, they'll tell her, "Come look, there's Abdelqader!"

"Oh, what a terrible thing!" She sighs. "He was such a nice boy."

The video brings back memories for everyone for a moment, and faces around the television appear sad or pensive: the death of this young man has evoked a sense of the finitude and fragility of life. Zohra's mother gazes at Abdelqader's image intently, as though his image has brought him back from the grave as a reminder of this and other profound issues.

We watch the wedding guests sit at long tables, drink tea, and eat pastries. Finally, the bride appears in the first of the four outfits that she will wear. The singing and clapping become deafening as she walks slowly toward her place next to her husband. She is surrounded by attendants who chant a traditional wedding song; these servants (*n'qqaffat*) are professionals who specialize in making up women for weddings and acting as their servants during them. The bride looks like a beautiful, glimmering doll. The weight of her jewels and the diadem she wears make it difficult for her to move. The camera zooms in on her face, glittering with rhinestones, a rainbow of colors. The entire room gazes only at her as she appears like a blinding beacon in her white and gold caftan. She slowly joins the groom at the top of a small stage, where the couple will preside over the festivities. She smiles, and we see her exchange happy looks with her new husband, then glance across the room at the guests. Her eye seems to catch one, then another, as the party continues.

People clap with the music and smile when the camera passes. One woman laughs and points straight at the camera as she tells her friend sitting beside her to look toward it. Everyone seems to feel very comfortable with the camera, as though it were an old family friend. It seems to elicit only smiles and seductive glances. The guests look at the central stage where the new couple form the focus of the celebration. The camera moves about this stationary set until young women get up to dance, bringing movement to the spaces between the long tables where the guests are seated. They seem to pay no attention to the camera or to the many eyes turned toward them. Only later will their talents be scrutinized on home television sets.

While watching another wedding celebration with a different family, a young girl teases her older brother: "Look there's Najat dancing! Hey, Susan, Mohammed thinks she's the best dancer! He was in high school with her. He thinks she's beautiful!"

"No, I didn't say that!" her brother grumbles as he passes through the living room on his way out. "I just said that she dances well. She was also pretty stupid in school."

But his sister persists. "She's married to a doctor now. She couldn't have been that ugly."

"No, she wasn't ugly, just not my type. Anyway, doctor's wives have all of their time to take dancing lessons in the afternoon."

His sister seems to agree with this comment and even appears a little jealous of the other woman's good match. She herself is still only twenty-two, but she would like to get married as soon as possible. And of course, she says, "A doctor is a good husband, since he must be intelligent and understanding, not just rich."

If television programming elevates the "nobody" to star status through elaborate attention to biographical detail, videos bring up the autobiographical question directly. Hans-Dieter Rath remarks that:

> ...the question "how have you become what you are today and would you do everything the same way a second time round?" has—since the mid-seventies—had a secure place in the entertainment, education and business of the mass-media: in documentary programmes, in interviews—in the most extreme form in "real life" psycho-transmission—most frequently in talk shows but often also in quiz and game shows, public figures (as well as nobodies) are asked to give biographical information or a detailed curriculum vitae.

As mentioned above, television programs can offer occasions for people to discuss sensitive topics indirectly, by speaking about a character or a problem in a soap opera instead of referring directly to themselves. In home videos, by contrast, oneself and one's family appear on the screen as important characters. Television is usually the space of stars and faraway places, but the video camera presents us with a cast of characters we can (and sometimes must) encounter in daily life. As we watch each other on tapes, we acquire a certain distance. When our own picture appears, we feel almost as though we were watching someone else. Discussions invariably turn to the relations between guests. the image's biographical importance inherent in any video, is amplified in wedding videos since weddings are important turning points in people's lives.

At most weddings I've attended or observed in videos, guests readily celebrate along with the cameras: indeed, the camera can become the main spectator. One young woman complained to me about her widowed aunt, who was dependent on her brother (the young woman's father) for support. The aunt borrowed a substantial sum from her brother to help pay for her daughter's wedding. On the day of the wedding the cousins all arrived and found to their surprise that the wedding was being videotaped.

> ...We were greeted at the door by two cameras, one for video, the other for photographs. Everything had been laid out for the cameras, so that good shots could be had of the guests and especially of the lavishly arranged refreshments. I really found it horrendous that this poor woman was spending such a lot of money on a single party. She has so very little, yet here she was hiring a professional video company to film the wedding.

Memoirs of a Street Tough

Yusuf Abu Haggag

(Everett K. Rowson, trans., *from* Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East, Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn A. Early, eds., Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 38-46. Reprinted by permission.)

An important feature of urban society in Egypt until recent times was the institution of the fitiwwa, the neighborhood tough. At his best, the fitiwwa represented a form of local recourse and authority for the residents of the hara (urban quarter), accessible and sympathetic to the humblest of them in a way the official government was not. At his worst, he was a pestilential thug, extorting protection money from the hara and spending his time carousing and brawling with his rivals.

Westernization in the nineteenth century undermined the fitiwwa's more beneficent functions, and the institution declined. At the same time, as the urban elite became both more Europeanized and more nationalistic, the archetype of the "traditional Egyptian" came to be increasingly identified with various lower-class figures, including the fitiwwa. One of a series of accounts of lower-class life published in the 1920s is the volume excerpted here, the 1929 memoirs of Yusuf Abu Haggag, the fitiwwa of the Huseiniya quarter of Cairo. Unlike other works of this sort, Yusuf's reminiscences were not recast in standard literary Arabic, but rather transcribed directly from his own rough-spoken account. They thus constitute a rare example of oral history in Arabic.

Radical demographic and social change in Cairo has by now made the role of the traditional fitiwwa obsolete; the last to achieve wide notoriety were those of the 1930s and 1940s. Street brawlers have not disappeared from the city, however, and the kind of life described by Yusuf Abu Haggag is still pursued, although with little hope of achieving any real power or status within the wider society. In elite circles, as the past receded, there has been another wave of interest in the traditional life of the hara, perhaps best typified by Naguib Mahfuz's 1978 novel on the fitiwwas' medieval predecessors, al-Harafish. - Ed.

I was born in Huseiniya Street, which is half in the precinct of Gamaliya and half in the precinct of Wayli. My father and mother lived in Harat al-Husr, which is in the precinct of Gamaliya. So you see I was raised among people who love bad language and hate book learning, and would rather learn about cleavers and whetstones. The fact is, most of the people in Huseiniya are butchers; they know how to slaughter and skin, but not, of course, how to read and write.

My father—may God have mercy on his dear soul—was a butcher, with a shop on the corner in Nuzha Street in Abbasiya. God had been good to him, and his business went well. He brought me up until I was seven, and had to put up with thirty fights a day from me, without letup. Then one day, after my mother's brother had a real fight and a half with my father, they ended up, after a lot of talk and bickering, sending me to the Qur'an school of Lady Sutuhiya, opposite Bab al-Futuh. I went every day, but only after a whipping from my uncle and a few pokes from my mother.

I would walk into the school with my loaf under my arm, and the monitor would meet me and reach out politely to take my loaf and put it in the Master's cupboard. Then we would all sit down on the old mats and tattered rags, and off we would go with our alphabet: "*Alif*, with no dots; *ba*, one dot underneath; *ta*, two dots on top.... " After two or three hours of this we would write on our slates and do memory work. Then we would recite, and nobody would escape getting two or three lashes. Myself, I almost always ended up with my feet in the stocks.

At noon, His Lordship the monitor would go out, along with yours truly and two other boys, each of us carrying an enormous bowl. We would go to the pickle factory in Seedsellers' Lane, fill up the bowls, and come back to school. Then they would collect the lunch money we had got from our families, and we would sit and gobble down the pickles. When we finished, we would have a reading lesson.

How long did I keep this up? Three and a half long years, of torture and total misery, until God had pity on me and I left the damned school. I had just barely learned to work out the letters, write my name, and read a line in a newspaper in an hour—or maybe two. My father took me on at the shop, and I soon forgot even the little bit of reading I had learned. So in the end I just resigned myself to God's will in my miserable condition. The truth is, friends, that "a constant buzzing in the ears gets the message across better than magic," and my father—God rest his soul in heaven—used to go on and on to me with, "Why should I send you to school, my boy? No books, no bother! Am I going to get a civil servant out of you, or a lawyer? Are you going to 'catch me a rat by the tail'? We've got a few sheep, a couple of calves, and the shop, and with the good Lord's help.... " So you see, friends, my father was the reason for my failure and lack of education. I resigned my fate to God, took off the fez and put on the skullcap and scarf, traded in my shoes for peasant slippers, and became a real street kid, to put it politely.

Time went by, and I grew up in this environment. I started hanging around with a group of guys who were all trouble by the bushel, who only knew God as a friend of a friend. We would go around together every night, to the bars, or the hashish dens, or we would spend some time in the red light district. And the reason for all of this was my father. If he had been brought up right and educated, I would have turned out like him or even better.... Gradually I became a member of Urabi's gang. Not a wedding or circumcision procession would go by without us all getting up to pick a fight with them. We would ask for a tune, and if they agreed we would dance and they would get off safely; but if they didn't, there would be hell to pay.

One day I left the house and went to the cafe, and found the gang had decided to go have a look around the zoo. They asked me what I thought, and I said, "Fine with me. Let's go!" We started off at eleven and got to the zoo at noon; but when we started to go in, it turned out that it was Sunday and they were charging five piastres admission. That put us in a bad mood, so on the way back we stopped in Dokki for a few pipes of hashish, and cheered up. Then we took the tram as far as Ataba, and got off and walked on to the place behind the post office. We stopped there, and I said to the gang, "What do you say? I'd like to do a little stick fighting, and this is a good open place for it!" They said, "For sure," and so we set to it. People gathered around as if they had heard the call of the snake charmer. I beat two guys, and started with a third; but this guy wanted to show off in front of everyone, thinking he was such a big deal, and went too far and gave me a real hard well-placed whack. The people laughed at me, thinking he had beat me, and I lost my head and let the devil take over. I took my stick and started laying into everyone standing around, just to show them that I was ready for anything and didn't care how many I took on. Everyone ran, except a guy from Huseiniya, who came up to me and started cursing my ancestors up and down. I grabbed him by the neck and threw him on the ground; he bloodied his face and broke a few teeth.

Then the police arrived and formed a ring around poor little me, and off we went to the Muski police station. They took statements from me and the guy I beat up, worked up the official police report, and put me in a cell. In the evening they let me out on the recognizance of the shaykh of the hara. A few days later the summons came, and I went to the hearing at the Gamaliya police station, and stood before the judge. A word here, a word there, he saw I had no record, and found me innocent. This was, after all, my first job in my new career as a fitiwwa! I left the courtroom with my friends, and went home.

I got my usual ten piastres allowance from my mother, and went back out again to the cafe. We sat there for a while, then a friend of mine named Balha turned up and said to me, "Come talk to Master Urabi! He wants you about something important." I said, "Okay," and went off to the cafe he went to, taking Balha with me. I found Master Urabi sitting there with Hagg Muhammad the cook, the fishmonger, and the guy I had tangled with on the day of the stick fighting. Then I realized that they had set up an unofficial hearing of their own! "Good evening." "Good evening." "Welcome, please take a chair." Then came the coffee and the water pipe. Finally, when they had heard what both of us had to say, they judged unanimously in my favor and against my opponent, and decided that he owed me recompense. Now in the code of the fitiwwas, recompense means that the losing party has to throw a party and invite all the brothers to it. So on the next day we had a real first-class party. Al-Arabi sang, and all the fitiwwas and *itras* came, and the evening ended nicely and peacefully.

I went home to bed, but then, just at the crack of dawn, I heard this guy Balha calling me... "Good morning!" I said. "What's up?" He said, "Good morning to you! Today there is a wedding in Bayn al-Aqdar, and we mustn't miss breaking it up!" I said, "Sure, whatever you say!" We went off to the cafe, where I washed my face, and we sat down and started the day off with a couple of pipes of hashish. Then we went off to have some beans for breakfast at Uncle Fal'us's, just at the end of Huseiniya Street, and came back again. We loafed around as usual, playing cards, until two in the afternoon.

A couple of hours later we saw a wedding procession coming, and got up with our clubs in our hands. As the procession got closer, we saw a whole herd of men leading it, and I was put forward to pick the quarrel. I asked for a tune, and that guy Sirafi, the fitiwwa of Bayn al-Aqdar, came up to me and said (pardon my language), "Stuff it!" This word from him was like a knife in the neck of yours truly, and my friends and I started bashing them. The procession broke up and became a mob. The guards fled, the police came, whistles blew. By that time we had slipped away to Costi's Tavern, the one beside the public facilities in the street with the tram that goes to Abbasiya. We sat and tossed back whiskey, cognac, and wine until evening. Then we went off to Bayn al-Aqdar. We went in and the fight began immediately. Lanterns and chairs went crashing, and the attendants and guests fled. The guard of the hara ran off like a shot, blowing his whistle, and out of nowhere it seemed like the entire precinct was in the hara—not to say that they had had advance warning! They arrested me and Balha right away, took us off to the station, and wrote up a real mess of a police report on us.

After spending four months in prison, Yusuf decides he must take up a trade and becomes manager of a butcher shop. But his constant brawling and debauchery leads to a series of further jail terms, one as long as three years. When not in prison, he continues to work as a butcher, and finally resolves to go into business for himself.

I found a shop for rent in Sakakini Street, and took it. I opened it up, stocked some mutton, and started doing business. The customers came in droves, and God was good to me. "Trust in the Lord, and you will be safe from people's envy." I applied for a license, and a few days later His Worship the *ma'mur* came by, bringing along a detective, the shaykh of the precinct, the shaykh of the hara, and, for good measure, a police officer with a black leather briefcase under his arm which he kept fussing with. The ma'mur came in and looked the shop over, left and right, as if he were the khedival architectural engineer. Then he looked at me and asked, "Why haven't you put some oil paint on the walls?" I said, "Listen, uncle, there's no question of oil here. What are we going to do with the place, hold parliament in it?" He said, "Shut up. I don't want any lip. I'm telling you: paint it." I shut up. Then he said, "This icebox won't do." I said, "For sure! But I'll lay you odds, by God, you won't find one as good in your house! Ha! You've left out a lot! You haven't said: Put red and white marble on the floor, install a faucet with a drain, bring in some Italian broad and sit her down on a chair and put a cash register in front of her, make price coupons like they do at Matossian's and put them on the meat, fix up a glass display window and put mutton and veal kidneys in it, install electricity, and 'turn the sea into sesame paste'! Come on, go easy on me—'a dry twig breaks easily!'"

He said, "Mind your manners, boy!" I said, "Manners?! When you come in here bellowing and throwing your weight around and issuing orders right and left? And for what? Do you think you're giving me a license for free admission to heaven? The way you come in here with those guards of hell behind you, you'd think this was Judgment Day, or that we'd killed somebody, and you've come to do an interrogation! Isn't it the case, my dear sir, that you've been commissioned by the government only to inspect, not to shoot off orders all over the place? Let's get it over with, what do you say? I want to close up and go home and eat dinner, without all this hassle."

In the end he wrote down something or other and put it in the briefcase the policeman was carrying, and left, taking the whole crowd with him. I said, "Good-bye! 'The boat that takes away is better than the one that brings.'" With or without the license, I was going to keep working—I was there, and that was that! What kind of authoritarian crap is this, my friends? It seems like we never manage to use our wits when we really need them. Here we are, listening to what we don't want to hear, all for a butcher's license! By God, do you know why they feel they've got to make life hell for us? Because a butcher won't give them a pound of meat free of charge or a choice piece of brisket! They'd rather people opened shops to sell cocaine, heroin, morphine, hashish, *manzul*, opium . . . all those illegal things whose sellers always have their hands in these guys' mouths and who they can always get a reward for hauling in and then go out on a spree and spend it all! But a gada's like me, who loves the Prophet and just wants to open a butcher shop—a respectable trade, needed by the pashas, beys, and effendis, and even those architectural experts—the whole kit and kaboodle of them—they walk all over him in the course of issuing him a license, hoping maybe something will fall out when they shake him or he'll let a word slip so the officer can claim that he insulted him or pulled off the buttons on his uniform—then you get the interrogation, the session in court, and the fine, which goes right into the safe, and "Good-bye!"

The next day I ran into that guy Balha, at the bend in the road in Sakakini, being beat up by four black guys. I lit into them, pow! bam! ...I came down with a blow from my stick right in the middle of his ugly mug, and drew blood, and with the second he went down. His friends ran away, and next thing I knew here was this big hulk of a cop running up, blowing his whistle.

Without even thinking I grabbed Balha by the arm; there was a tram passing near by, and I went and jumped on it, bringing Balha with me. We got to one stop, and then another, and the whole time the cop kept running after us and yelling, until he was really panting. The conductor started to blow his whistle to stop the tram, but I grabbed the whistle out of his hand and said, "Shame on you! You shouldn't hold up all these nice people just because of something of no importance! You think that's a paying customer? He just wants to ride for free! Never mind about him; let him be!" The cop finally ran out of energy and gave it up. We got off the tram and went to Costi's

Tavern...We fed our heads, and went back to Huseiniya, and each went home.

A few days later the shaykh of the hara came by with a piece of paper with my name, saying the ma'mur of the precinct wanted me. I thought, "Now you're in for it, you reprobate! One of those black guys must have recognized you, and something must have happened to the one you beat up." Anyway, I set off on a Soares cab to the station. When I got there, I went upstairs and found the sergeant, Abdu, and asked him, "What does the ma'mur want me for?" He said, "By God, I don't know. Go in and ask the prefect." I went into the prefect's office, and he turned out to be a student type, about nineteen, sitting there on his chair like he owned the world. There were seven or eight guys in front of him who had apparently been hauled in for brawling, but he, bless his soul, just sat there joking and laughing with this effendi type in street clothes. I stood and waited with the latest arrivals.

...Finally, I got bored with waiting, and stepped up to the prefect and said, Come on, sir, take care of our business; after all, we have our own work to see to, too." He replied, "What do you want? When did you get here?" I said, "I think you're old enough to remember that! You've just not been paying attention! Actually, I came here to see your ugly mug, sir!" He said, "Listen, here, you bastard!" I said, "Shut your mouth or I'll tear you to pieces! 'Not all birds have meat you can eat!' No, you'd better watch your step and make a real careful reckoning of this guy standing before you!" He said, "Who do you think you are? Urabi?" I said, "As good as!" Then the effendi sitting with him got up and said to him, "Ignore him. You don't have to have any truck with him. He's just a street kid, anyway." I said, "I may be a street kid, but I understand more than you ever will, you with the jacket and tie!" The prefect said, "Mind your manners, boy!" I said to him, "You'd best shut up! By the right of the one who made you a prefect and put that star on your shoulder, I'll take that police report in front of you and put it on your head—and your friend, too—and I'll mess up your face real good! Do you two think you're sitting here in a dance hall? You're sitting in a government office, you jerks! Get with it! Take care of these people here and let us go about our business!"

We started yelling back and forth at each other, and His Honor the ma'mur heard us. He sent for me, and also called in the prefect. When we went in, the ma'mur asked me what was going on, and I told him the whole story from beginning to end. May God prosper his house and raise his status...the ma'mur turned to me and said, "What's your name?" I said, "Yusuf Abu Haggag, at your service." He said, "A man named Murgan from Sakakini Street has filed a complaint against you." I said, "Who is this Murgan, Your Lordship? That wouldn't be Murgan the son of Emerald, whose grandfather was the shaykh Ruby and whose brother is that boy Diamond?" He said, "What are you talking about, boy?" I said nothing. He said, "Answer me, boy! Why are you silent?" I said, "I'm thinking, Your Lordship, about a saying I heard from my grandfather—God be gracious and merciful to him!" The ma'mur asked, "What's that?" I said, "He used to say, 'If speech is silver, then silence is golden.' " He said, "Cut out this nonsense, boy! What do you have to say about this complaint which has been filed against you? It says here that you are a 'vicious, depraved delinquent.' " I said, "Great! A 'vicious, depraved delinquent.' So what about it?" He said, "I have to make out a police report." I said, "This warrants a police report? Well, all right, I'll welcome that with a hundred jasmine flowers, a thousand narcissus! I'm at your service, at your beck and call!"

He rang the bell and transferred me to the prefect. I went out and found that the prefect from before had gone off duty, and his replacement was a *gada*, a little dark brown guy who looked like a mongrel, with a father from Kordofan and a mother from Cairo. I went up to him, and he said, "Are you So-and-so?" I said, "I am him and he is me." He laughed, and I could tell he was a simple type, and I thought maybe a decent sort. He said, "What is your trade?" I said, "Butcher." He said, "Where do you live?" I said, "I live in the wellspring of gad'anal and the school for skirmishing." He said, "So you live in Huseiniya?" I said, "Give me your hand on that one! You're a sharp one, they can't deny that! What luck for me!" He said, "How old are you?" I said, "Ha! Whatever you think! Is this a recruitment center? I trust your judgment." He said, "I'd say thirty or thirty-five." I said, "In between." He said, "What, then?" I said, "Write thirty-two, and let the good Lord decide whether it's true.

The report completed, Yusuf is released on bail. Pessimistic about the outcome of his day in court, he bids farewell to his friend Balha:

"My brother, my parting advice to you is to do whatever you can to come keep me company during those lonely nights in jail. The first big lout that says a word to you, make a pancake of him and bury him alive!" He said, "By God, believe me, brother, I'll be lying in wait for them like the Angel of Death! And I'll mete out my mischief so each one gets his share!" I added, "And forget about things like mercy and humanity—not in these times! These times, when people say "Oh Lord, I want . . . " and nobody has any use for virtue! Read the Fatiha" and accept the advice of your good brother, a gada' who can shake the deepest foundations of the prison, and who will soon be director of the most prestigious cell in the places! Good-bye, Abu Ali! "Good-bye, brother!"

Once in court, however Yusuf manages to goad the plaintiffs into insulting the judge and unexpectedly wins his case. Disillusioned with his disorderly life, he gives up drinking and brawling, marries a cousin, and settles down at the life of a respectable butcher.

Naguib Mahfouz Remembers

(Gamal Al-Ghitani, *Naguib Mahfouz Remembers: Regional Fame to Global Recognition*, Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar, eds., Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993, pp. 37-40, 43-4. Reprinted by permission.)

I have never come across anyone more attached to his place of birth than Naguib Mahfouz. He lived in the Jamaliyya Quarter [of Cairo] for the first twelve years of his life and then moved to the 'Abbasiyya Quarter, but he has always remained drawn to the quarters and the narrow streets of Al-Husayn and Al-Jamaliyya. He has remained attached to the people he had come to know and who came to know him. This place has become the setting for his most important and greatest works.

We started in Midan Al-Husayn and stopped in the center of it for a few moments. Naguib Mahfouz looked serene and confident; he appeared resigned to the surge of memories.

From Midan Al-Husayn, we proceeded to a spot which served as the inspiration for one of his greatest novels *Zuqaq al-Midaqq* (*Midaq Alley*). To reach Midaq Alley from the side of the Azhar, we first have to go through Sanadiqiyya Street covered with dirt, the refuse of the stores and houses. Naguib Mahfouz noted regretfully, "These streets and alleys used to be swept clean twice a day: they used to sprinkle them with water. I personally still remember the famous mule belonging to the municipality, the garage for carts, the stable of mules which was next to the judge's home." Mahfouz pointed out some buildings erected in the Thirties and recalled old homes surrounded by gardens that stretched out to Midaq Alley. The alley is very narrow, no wider than five meters, and no longer than twelve. The coffee house was closed, for today was Sunday. There were three shops on the other side. "I remember that there was only the coffee house in the alley," he added. "I don't remember that house." In the middle of the alley stood a spice shop. Three elderly men sat in front of it.

We left the alley and the coffee house where Naguib Mahfouz used to mingle with his friends in bygone days. So the idea behind *Midaq Alley* was born in this very spot—taking shape scene by scene, event by event—giving this narrow, forgotten place notoriety and fame. I recall having accompanied one day an Orientalist who insisted on seeing Midaq Alley. He came to the place, stood there contemplating it and said laughing, "If Naguib Mahfouz wrote that extraordinary novel about this narrow, confined place, can you imagine what he could have accomplished if he had written about a thoroughfare like Shari' Al-Azhar?"

We proceeded to Al-Hamzawi Souk, where the small shops of spices and perfumes still stand, where the *souk* (marketplace) still occupies the same spot, just as it used to. It was a typical nineteenth-century Egyptian marketplace, without a counter between buyer and seller. Had this marketplace existed in any European country, someone would have intervened to renovate it and turn it into a tourist attraction. From there we headed to the "Gold Market." Mahfouz stopped at the entrance of the Salihiyya Alley. Overhead stood the minaret of Al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub, one of Cairo's oldest minarets, distinguished by its *mibkhara*, or incense burner shape. It is considered a particularly early minaret design, from a period when the forms were first taking shape.

We moved through the copper market (Suq al-Nahhasin) where Mahfouz conceived of the place of Ahmad 'Abd al-Jawad's shop, in The Trilogy, (a famous trio of novels relating the story of one family through the period of Egypt's move to nationhood.) I noticed that he stared at some length at some corners, while he walked slowly by others. In most instances he would lift his head as if meditating. At this point, I did not wish to disturb his memories with too many questions.

"This side used to be a souk exclusively for Syrian merchants. They used to sit in front of their stores, wearing huge yellow turbans, smoking their water-pipes and displaying their merchandise: apricot paste, almonds, nuts, pistachios and walnuts." He pointed to the remains of an old and spacious building. "This," he said, "used to be the mansion of the Muhaylimis, an important family. Some of them took part in the July 23rd revolution."

In 1924 Mahfouz was twelve years old and his family had moved from the old house in Bayt al-Qadi to the house in 'Abbasiyya (his father paid a thousand pounds for it). Naguib Mahfouz, however, remained drawn strongly to the Jamaliyya Quarter, often visiting the Midaq Alley Coffee House and Al-Fishawi, and one friend in particular who was a merchant in the Ghuriyya Quarter.

Those twelve years spent in Jamaliyya sank deep into Mahfouz's psyche. They were forcefully reflected in his fictional work. Al-'Abbasiyya, where he spent all of his youth and early manhood, appears only as a secondary locale, which can be reached from Al-Jamaliyya, as we follow Kamal, one of the heroes of The Trilogy, who visits the mansion of the Shaddad family by going from Jamaliyya to 'Abbasiyya. As for Al-'Aguza, or Al-Nil Street, they do not even figure in his work. The modern thoroughfares, the tall buildings left no impression on him. He considered these merely convenient places to live, work and sleep in. Old Cairo during Mahfouz's time was a center for the petite bourgeoisie, the successful merchants and civil servants. The alleys of Jamaliyya had a rather strange social structure. One could easily find in the same alley a mansion surrounded by a beautiful spacious garden, and right next to it the modest house of a merchant. In the vicinity there would be a large *rab*, or tenement for dozens of poor people. Typically the *hara* (alley) housed all social classes. One could see that unique structure in Harat al-Tablawi in the area of Qasr al-Shawq.

Mahfouz got married in the mid-Fifties, and moved to Al-Nil Street in the suburb of Al-'Aguza, and lived in a small first-floor apartment overlooking the Nile. But he never lost his connections in Al-Jamaliyya. His yearnings for old Cairo remained powerful and overwhelming, and this old world, and these ancient alleys formed the core of his works. He succeeded in refracting its spirit forcefully and truthfully, immortalizing the area in his writings.

An Issue of Identity
Ethnicity

Kurdish Poetry
The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
(by Abdullah Pesew, Dr. Michael Chyet, trans.)

When a diplomat visits a foreign land,
He sets a wreath in place
At the tomb of its unknown soldier.

If tomorrow
A diplomat should visit my country
And ask me,
"Where is the tomb of the unknown soldier?"
"Sir," I would say,
"On the banks of every canal,
On the platform outside every mosque,
At the entrance to every house,
Every church,
Every cave,
On every mountain peak,
On the treetops of every orchard
In this land.
On every inch of earth,
Below every stretch of sky.
So don't hesitate,
Bow your head and
Set your wreath in place."

The Kurds in Iraq, Iran and Turkey
Three Kurdish Perspectives
(Extractions of articles from *The Washington Report On Middle Eastern Affairs*, 1992. Reprinted by permission.)

1. Iraq: "Kurds Have No Friends But Their Mountains"
(Dr. Ahmed Ferhadi, a Kurd born in Iraq, teaches at New York University.)

> *"[Kurds] constitute one of the largest races, indeed nations, in the world today to have been denied an independent state. Whatever the yardstick for national identity, the Kurds measure up to it."*

So says Donald McDowall, of London-based Minority Rights Group...

Since antiquity, the Kurds...have occupied a vast, cohesive region called "Kurdistan" which means the land of the Kurds. It comprises northwestern parts of present-day Iran, northern Iraq, parts of northern Syria and southeastern Turkey, which overlaps into the Republic of Armenia. Since the early 13th century, much of this area has been called Kurdistan, although it was not until the 16th century that the term came into common usage to mean a system of Kurdish fiefs. The main concentration of Kurds is to be found nowadays in that part of Kurdistan where Iraq, Iran and Turkey meet.

Kurdistan was never wholly independent as one state. Within Kurdistan, however, there were semi-independent Kurdish principalities from the 11th to the 19th centuries. They constituted a buffer between the two rival empires of the Shi'i Muslim Safavids and the Sunni Muslim Ottomans for centuries, until the last Kurdish prince was finally deprived of his power in 1865.

After the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, President Woodrow Wilson called for a state for the Kurds in 1919. The Treaty of Sévres of 1920 was ratified by the Ottomans, but Kemal Ataturk, who founded the present-day Turkish Republic, refused to abide by it. The subsequent Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 totally ignored the issue of an independent Kurdistan...It is the dream of Kurds everywhere to live one day in a united independent Kurdistan. None of the countries among which Kurdistan has been divided has ever permitted a referendum on independence among its Kurdish inhabitants. In an era that has witnessed the breakup of the Soviet empire and of Yugoslavia, culminating in the emergence or re-emergence of numerous independent countries and the reunification of countries like Yemen and Germany, the 25 million Kurds resent the fact that the winds of change are not blowing in their direction as well.

Kurdistan has all the requisites for an economically viable independent state. It is rich in oil and other minerals such as chrome, copper, iron, coal and lignite. It is also rich in water and fertile arable lands, and has great potential for tourism...most Kurds are aware of the geopolitical constraints. Kurdistan is a landlocked country divided among four states, whose governments are all suppressive and totally undemocratic in outlook toward their Kurds...the [reality] of striving for more rights within each country seems to Kurds to be more viable and attainable as they wait for change.

The state of Iraq, in an area known to the West as "Mesopotamia," was created under the British Mandate (1920-1932) from some provinces of the defunct Ottoman state. Iraq's first king, Faisal I from present-day Saudi Arabia was installed by the British...this underscored the problem of identity in an Iraqi population of Shi'i Arabs in the south, Sunni Arabs in the center and Sunni non-Arab Kurds in the north.

[Over the years, succeeding monarchies ensued.] In the military coup when the Ba'th party came to power in February, 1963...many elements of Iraqi society suffered enormously, but the Kurds bore the brunt. Units of the regular Syrian army arrived in Iraqi Kurdistan to aid the Iraqi army and a force of mercenaries in waging a bloody war against the Kurds...[Since] 1968, the Ba'thists have embarked on a campaign of systematically depriving the Kurds of their livelihood and annihilating them. They razed more than 4,000 villages, poisoned water supplies, used chemical weapons against the Kurds, and even buried them alive in mass graves.

The Kurdish areas of Iraq cover roughly 74,000 square kilometers, 17% of Iraq's total area of 438,446 square kilometers. In March 1975 the Iraqi regime granted half of Iraqi Kurdistan its own version of autonomy, and officially renamed it the Autonomous Region...At that time, the Kurds accepted neither the scope nor the terms of this autonomy, which came to mean nothing but more and more suppressive measures. Autonomy simply did not work. Today, at the grassroots level, Iraqi Kurds reject the notion of autonomy out of hand. With the scepter of genocide still haunting them, many Kurds call for outright secession from Iraq, and independence. Other Kurds talk of entering a voluntary federation with the Iraqi Arabs, who also have suffered enormously at the hands of the current regime, on the basis of economic and social parity in a post-Saddam era.

During the long Iran-Iraq war, Iraq charged some Kurdish leaders with collaborating with the Iranian enemy. This was the basis for the harsh crackdown on Kurdish civilians and the resort to use of chemical weapons against Kurdish villages as early as 1986. The Saddam government continued its genocidal campaign...until shortly before the Gulf war. In a report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,...it is said that mass graves were being uncovered in Kurdistan and other evidence was surfacing suggesting that up to 182,000 Kurds had been killed in Iraqi government "extermination camps."

After the Gulf War, units of Saddam's Republican Guard violently crushed a spontaneous uprising of the Shi'is in the south and the Kurds in the north. About two million Kurds had to flee for their lives and take to the mountains seeking refuge in Iran and Turkey. At the outset, about 500 children were dying every day.

These events have proven that the Kurdish issue is no longer merely a humanitarian issue or an internal one involving only one country. It is a political issue with international ramifications that transcends state borders. Furthermore, in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, there is ample evidence of genocide...The old adage that "Kurds have no friends but their mountains" need not remain valid for yet another century.

2. Iranian Kurds No Better Off Than in Shah's Time

(Dr. Hassanpor, a Kurd born in Iran, is a Professor at Windsor University in Canada.)

Iran's policy on the Kurds...has been remarkably similar to that of the Shah. It denies the existence of the Kurds as a nation, as a distinct ethnic group or even as a linguistic minority. It suppresses their demands for national rights and it keeps Kurdistan under firm military and political control.

...The new Islamic regime...had no base of support in Kurdistan or among other nationalities such as Turkmans and Baluchis. The Kurds [believe] there is no difference between the old and new regimes. Both were centralist and despotic states motivated by Persian chauvinism. Less then two months after assuming power, the Islamic revolutionary government unleashed its army against the Kurds...The Iranian government has succeeded...in temporarily suppressing the Kurdish nationalist movement. The towns and cities are under the rule of the capital and the Kurdish guerrillas have been driven out of the countryside and into Iraqi countryside. Today a vast network of garrisons, outposts, military roads and some 200,000 Iranian military personnel maintain loose control over Kurdish villages and strategic locations.

Ideologically, the Islamic republic has failed to win the hearts and minds of secular, nationalists Kurds who refuse to become Islamicized. Although Iranian Kurds, like other Muslim peoples, respect their religion, they have developed a deep-seated hatred of the Islamic theocracy imposed upon Iran since 1979...On the surface, Iranian Kurds seem to have been spared such genocidial measures as the Ba'thist Party's annihilation of the Kurds. However, all of the genocidal acts committed against Kurds in Iraq, Turkey and Syria have been committed against Iranian Kurds, too, albeit on a lesser scale.

...Since the 1991 Gulf war, both Ankara (capital of Turkey) and Tehran (capital of Iran) have opposed the formation of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Iran's two primary interests are to keep Iranian Kurds under control by preventing their cooperation with Iraqi Kurds and to prevent Turkish annexation of Iraqi Kurdistan.

...While the day-to-day picture seems to be extremely vague and unpredictable, the pattern is tragically clear...Three centuries of war in Kurdistan have brought enormous destruction and suffering to its people. But Kurdish leaders, when they were rulers of their own numerous principalities, failed to unite and, instead, functioned as pawns in destructive wars. This pattern runs through the present conflict in which local, regional and international powers are actively involved.

Kurdish leaders, especially in Iraq, seem encouraged by the disintegration of multinational countries, and the formation of independent ethnic states in the former U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia. They fail to see that neither the regional nor the Western powers are interested in the independence or even the autonomy of any part of Kurdistan...A divided Kurdish leadership, however, is incapable of harvesting fields where the Kurds have sown their blood and tears for centuries...[attaching] the destiny of the Kurdish people to the interests of this or that world power, hoping to form a Kurdish client state.

3. Turkey Cracking Down on Kurdish Aspirations

(Dr. Elturan, a Kurd born in Turkey, teaches at Indiana University.)

A workable coalition of a left-leaning party and a rightist party was unheard of in Turkey...In January, 1992, two long-time political rivals, the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) and the True Path Party (DYP), joined forces to form a Turkish government, the unlikely event probably dashed hopes for a peaceful solution to Turkey's Kurdish question. Initially, the new government promised more democracy, an end to martial law in Turkish Kurdistan and improvement in Turkey's human rights records.

...The government wants to defeat the banned PKK (Worker's Party of Kurdistan) militarily and to isolate the People's Labor Party (HEP). These are the two parties that call for Kurdish rights...The PKK, established in 1984, wanted independence from Turkey. Now it calls for a more limited federative solution. The PKK has some 10,000 fighters and can muster more. By the end of 1991, it had routed regular army posts from many rural areas of Turkish Kurdistan. Most important, PKK actions brought the Kurdish question to the forefront of Turkish public attention...

The People's Labor Party (HEP), on the other hand, has a mixed membership of Turks and Kurds. It advocates a political solution to the Kurdish question. In 1992, the outgoing Turkish government altered election laws to prevent the HEP from participating in the general elections. The HEP, therefore, merged with the SHP in order to qualify. Turkey's SHP-DYP government, like its predecessors, hopes to solve the Kurdish question through economic reforms. The government's reform package is limited to economic measures to improve the standard of living in Kurdish areas, and does not address Kurdish demands for political and cultural rights.

...The U.S. and European governments bear direct responsibility for the miserable Kurdish situation, by providing the oppressor states with increasingly sophisticated technologies of death. For decades, Western officers have helped to build the Turkish army, the world's fourth largest, as a bulwark against the Soviet Union.

...The Turkish government will not negotiate a peaceful settlement with PKK "terrorists" or with HEP "separatists" as long as the West keeps supplying it weapons. Turkey's policy of "one country, one flag and one language" is the greatest obstacle to a peaceful solution. Meanwhile, world sympathy, Kurdish patriotism and the hope for freedom continue to inspire the Kurds of Turkey to challenge the odds.

The Minorities Question in Iran

(Nikki Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World: Renaissance and Revolution*, New York, NY: MacMillan, 1995, pp. 127-153.)

Religious Tolerance in the Muslim Middle East

In the past, the Muslim world has shown greater religious tolerance than the West. Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Mandeans were allowed to follow their own religion and to be governed by their own laws. In the Iran-Iraq area, the larger struggle has been between the Sunnis and the Shi'is. They reflect the struggle between Iran that was made Shi'ite by the Safavid dynasty in the 16th century and the Sunni Ottomans, who failed to conquer Shi'a Iran. The Ottoman Empire and its successor Arab states were politically identified with Sunnism, and Iran with Shi'ism. Both were and still are regarded as the true Islam, from which the other group has deviated.

Linguistic and "Ethnic" Differences

Linguistic and "ethnic" differences have assumed much more importance in the modern period than they had in premodern times. In Iraq and Iran, linguistic minorities are largely tribal. (Tribe roughly means self-identification, political cohesion under recognized leaders, belief in descent of tribal leaders from a common ancestor, general linguistic unity, and often a pastoral economy. Tribes also tend to concentrate in arid or mountainous areas, often far from control by the central government.) The Kurds, living in several countries, now constitute a huge conglomeration of tribes and non-tribal peoples united by languages and culture.

Nationalism, Minorities and Class

This is the rise of ethnic nationalism in the Middle East. Minorities are often economically oppressed or neglected. In Iraq, most Kurds and Arab Shi'is have long been oppressed by Sunni Arab-dominated governments. The Kurds have been largely by-passed in Iran's economic development program, and the Lurs, Arabs and Baluchis remain even poorer than the Kurds. With the exodus of the Jews after 1948, their place in trade was taken by Shi'is. Sunni Arabs and Kurds and Shi'i Arabs thus occupy a variety of class positions, but Shi'is and Kurds have been relatively disfavored economically both in the premodern and the modern period.

Iranian Ethnic Minorities

Muslim Ethnic Minorities: The largest groups are the Azerbaijanis and Kurds. The number of Azerbaijani Turks include those who have migrated from Azerbaijan but still speak Azerbaijani as a first language, range from 6 to 13 million; and 9 to 10 million, or almost a quarter of Iran's population, seems a reasonable estimate. Iranian Kurds are now generally estimated at about 4 million. Baluchis may number 1.5 million and Arabs, 1 million. Among the ethnic minorities are:

> (a) Azerbaijani and Gilaki-speaking people of Gilak and Mazandaran: Shi'ite in religion; Indo-European language but also speak Persian easily; close to Persians in life style.
>
> (b) Kurds, Turkomans, Baluchis, and Arabs: Largely tribal and pastoral in origin; Sunni in religion either in part or completely. These people are also distinguished by having a large, related ethnic group across the border.
>
> (c) Tribes and tribal confederations that are Shi'ite without tribal connections across the border and not menacing.

Settled, Nontribal Peoples

Azerbaijanis: Ever since the mid-11th c. invasion by the Seljuk Turks, Iran has been ruled mainly by Turkish-speaking dynasties of tribal-nomadic origin, and it is the heavy presence of invading Turkish tribes and rulers that accounts for the Azerbaijans' Turkish speech. Tabriz was Azerbaijan's capital. There was a small rebellion after WWI and the autonomist governmment instituted a number of reforms, etc. but this was militarily suppressed in late 1921. Azerbaijanis have long led the struggle for democratic rights in Iran. After the 1979 revolution, many Azerbaijanis identified with a more liberal Ayattolah. But the Azerbaijani tie to the center is strong and there have been many pro-Khomeini mullahs from Azerbaijan who have held top positions in the government.

Turkomans: Sunni border tribal peoples. Have grown rich since WWII through mechanized cultivation of cotton. After 1979 revolution they feared discrimination by Shi'ite state. Since that time there have been several armed revolts.

Baluchis: Southeast Iran, not much contact or intermixture with Persians. Baluchistan is the poorest and most backward region of Iran because of its aridity. Baluchis have asked for local autonomy, including internal self-rule, teaching of their own language and religious equality.

Arabs: Live in Khuzistan, the greatest oil-producing province and the site of the largest refinery. Iran would not want to lose this province. Arab propaganda outside Iran maintains that before the Shah there was an independent state of Arabistan and the Shah annexed the territory. Arab autonomism has been encouraged by Arabs outside Iran, especially Iraqis. However, evidence appears to show that Iranian Arabs identify more with Iran than with Arab nationalist statements.

Kurds: This group has had the most significant conflict with the central government. The Kurds are said to constitute the largest contiguous ethnic group in the world (E. Turkey and W. Iraq) that has never had its own nation-state, although large parts of Kurdistan were autonomous under the Ottoman Empire. The Kurds are a more ancient people in the area than the Turks or the Arabs and number as many as 10,000,000 internationally. Their nationalist movement dates back to the 19th century. They had hoped for autonomous and democratic reforms after the 1979 revolution in Iran and several political parties developed, nearly all of them leftist. In December 1979, The Iranian government announced a program granting limited autonomy to minorities. No changes were made in provincial borders and the Kurds remained scattered through several provinces of mixed population. Some Kurdish leaders in the world have advocated for an independent Kurdish state.

Bakhtiaris: Speak an Indo-European language; Have greater autonomy since 1978 but there have been increased internal struggles.

Iranian Religious Minorities

Jews: Once were numbered at about 80,000; wholly urban concentrated in Tehran with Shiraz as a second center. Many Jews emigrated to Israel, though some came back and some were too poor to go anywhere.

Armenians: Christians; Indo-European language, not close to Persian. Play a minor role in politics and many have left Iran since 1978. Many work as traders and in the crafts.

Nestorians: Christians who speak Assyrian, modern version of the ancient Semitic Aramaic. Live in a region surrounded by Kurds and Azerbaijanis but many have moved to Teheran recently.

Zoroastrians: Several thousand - same as Parsis in Soth Asia.

Sabeans (Mandeans): They are "People of the Book". Live in Khuzistan near the Iraqi border, work in precious metals. They are called "Christians of St. John the Baptist."

Baha'is: they number 250,000 - not protected as People of the Book. They are descended from the messianic Babi religion. They have never been a recognized religion in any country that calls itself Muslim, since their recognition would go counter to strict Islamic law and sentiment. As such they are a heavily persecuted minority, considered worse than pagans, more aptly apostates. They believe there will be a number of prophets and scriptures.

The Last Arab Jews
The Communities of Jerba, Tunisia

(by Abraham L. Udovitch, Princeton University and Lucette Valensi, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Lausanne, Switzerland: The Gordon & Breach Publishing Group, 1984, pp.24-5, 27, 49-51, 58-60, 85-6, 88-9. Reprinted by permission.)

Whether in the crowd at the market of Houmt Souk or among the small groups meandering down the alleyways of the two villages, it does not take very long for an observer to discover that Jerba's population is not homogeneous and that its constituent elements belong to different groups. Take the case of Rabbi Khamus. He is a short, slight man with thick glasses and a long beard. Dressed in white, he is wearing large, billowing oriental trousers which reach just below his knees, a vest over his shirt and a *burnous* of light wool draped over one of his shoulders. On his head there is the inevitable red *chechia*. All of these are quite ordinary items of traditional Tunisian attire. Yet, one can tell that he is a Jew since he is wearing the *chechia* toward the back of his head. One can further tell that he is a rabbi or scholar because of his beard and white garb. And, if he were to speak, his accent would reveal his ethnic, religious identity.

From this point of view, the Jerban Jews emerge as an ethnic group among the other communities, each having at its disposal an entire array of signs, gestures and words which fashion their identity and govern their interaction with others.

The details of costume are among the main distinguishing features. Like the other inhabitants of the area, the Jews wear either the traditional, indigenous costume, or clothing influenced by Western fashions. In either case, there are several signs pointing to Jewish identity. If they wear the indigenous costume, for example, they place the chechia, like our Rabbi Khamus, well back on their heads, whereas the Muslims wear it forward, much closer to their foreheads. The traditional trousers worn by the Jews are either grey or brown and bordered at the bottom by a black band which, according to them, is a symbol of mourning commemorating the destruction of the Temple. When they wear a turban, which is very rare these days, it too is black. A beard almost always designates a Jew, an educated one to be sure, whereas the moustache generally graces a Muslim face.

The borderline between Jews and Muslims marked by their mode of dress is slowly fading and its markers are becoming less obvious. Other differences, however, persist. While the great majority of Jerbans are Arabic speakers, the use of language differs depending on whether one is talking with an outsider or members of one's own group. The Jews have their own distinct accent, a dialect heavily laced with Hebrew words and a discourse mixed with idiomatic expressions which they share only among themselves. Jewish women, for their part, use a form of speech which their menfolk consider a different language. While these numerous nuances mark differences in gender and status, they do not slow oral communication.

Young girls spend the afternoon together with other girls their own age, now at one house, now at another. They knit, crochet, sew or make talismans to the accompaniment of the radio or the television. They stop whatever they are doing to follow television serials. Through these programs, the girls acquire a familiarity with the fine points of Egyptian and Lebanese Arabic much greater than that possessed by their elders and their brothers, thus participating unconsciously in the broad movement of Arabization currently spreading all over North Africa...Girls cluster in small groups, sharing their knowledge and skills, teaching one another the techniques of knitting and embroidery.

Saturday is the visiting day. Women favor the houses in which some important event has taken place, such as sickness, a birth, the arrival of news from the outside concerning a member of the family who has emigrated, an engagement, or a death. News is known immediately, since a member of the family concerned becomes the door-to-door messenger as soon as something has happened. It would be an insult to a household not to inform it of some important episode. It is also an insult not to respond in the proper manner, that is, with a visit and with words and gestures appropriate to the circumstances. If a death occurs, the women keep the mourners company throughout the entire week following the death. Hara Sghira still has its professional mourners, specialists in eulogizing the dead and in uttering the moans of grief. These have disappeared in Hara Kebira, but its women still hold their week-long vigils. Similarly, a wedding requires eight days of gatherings.

In any case, it is within the space circumscribed by the two cords of the *'eruv* that the young girls and the women move around. They do not cross the market square, and they do not leave the village. In fact, before the opening of the girls' school put an end to their seclusion, their lives were usually divided between two houses: first their father's, and then their husband's. Marriage is the move from one to the other, and the bride makes this transition behind layers of veils, without seeing or being seen. There are women in Hara Kebira who hardly know any neighborhood other than the ones in which they grew up and into which they were married.

For the men, it is a completely different matter. All public, organized activities require their participation. They have at their disposal several spaces which they enter by stages. As small boys, they live in the house, i.e. in the women's quarters. Once they have reached the age of four, they divide their time between the *yeshiva*—an exclusively male world—and the home.

To preserve their identity, Jerban Jews have put in place a protective system of exclusion and enclosure. They erected a series of barriers around their communities, and every time one of these crumbles, another is raised in its place. "Build a fence around the Torah" (Talmud Pirkei Avot), by following this injunction to the letter, the Jerbans have maintained their cultural integrity. But it is by no means sure that they will long be able to sustain this policy with the same success. For this fortress is mainly defensive, and the only weapons in its arsenal are symbolic.

Once you have passed beyond the circle of people whom you know, you reach a world where indifference and neutrality are *not* the rules of the game. The fact that everyone is assigned to his own group implies that people from different groups do not ignore each other, even when they do not know each other. The small incidents of daily life, the gibes, the dirty tricks, the occasional openly hostile actions, regularly remind the Jews that though they are tolerated, they live under the domination of others. While the status of the *dhimmi* has disappeared, the corresponding condition still exits. The Jews who are most deeply anchored in tradition have a word to define it, *galut*, the exile in which the Jewish people live, and from which they can expect nothing but misery and slavery until the day of redemption. Meanwhile, the only strategy is resignation. A Jerban author explains this phenomenon.

> *"The Jew was always subject to humiliations, to wrath, to false accusations. But he was used to it, and accepted the full implications of galut, of life in exile. He bent his head under every storm which came to disturb his peaceful life.... He bore this burden with joy as long as his neighbors accorded him minimal rights, in exchange for these he gave up the right to walk among them with his head held high."*

Since Tunisian independence, the conditions of this *modus vivendi* have changed. Only recently, both Jews and Muslims were without any power. Like the rest of the country, Jerban society was divided up into collective entities, more or less walled off from one another by language, by religious affiliation, or simply by ties of kinship. Beyond these, the state seemed remote and inaccessible. Now, even though local differences are still maintained and visible, all Muslims take part in a national system with a state and its representatives. They can participate in the political system and benefit from it on the local level. But the Tunisian state, while preaching an ideology of equality and unity, is neither secular nor pluralist. Therefore, the Jews who themselves are strangers to any secularist ideology—are, de facto, excluded from the political game and placed in the position of being dominated by the majority group. They are changing from a community into a minority. When the need arises, they respond to collective threats through traditional means: penitence and recourse to patronage. While the rabbi decrees prayer and fasting within the community, others, on the outside, bring into play the relations of clientage which unite the Jews to various influential people in the area and, by stages, to influential people in the capital. Collective memory has kept alive the precedent of the Jerban family which gave asylum to Jews during the revolt of 1864. One century later, the descendants of this family are expected to fulfill the same role.

Young Jerban Jews no longer speak about galut. Like other Tunisians they have been brought up with the political language of an independent Tunisia, and have internalized one of its major themes: condemnation of isti'mar, of colonialism and domination. The young people do not accept their state of subjection. They have appropriated this nationalist discourse, but have no way of applying it to their own situation within Tunisia. Hence this movement between two imperfect choices, between turning inward and turning outward, between withdrawal back into the confines of the Hara or of emigration from it. Withdrawal within its confines would maintain an active civic life within the narrow horizons of the community and would allow the community to endure; emigration would shatter this collective life whose preservation they are striving to safeguard.

In 1926, the population of the two communities was 3,800, in 1936, 4,100, in 1946 over 4,300. If they had developed at the same demographic pace as the rest of Tunisia, the Jews of Jerba would now number 15,000. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the independence of Tunisia in 1956, the forced creation of cooperatives which severely upset local economic life in the early 1960's, then the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 were each followed by waves of emigration—mostly to Israel. Consequently, the Jewish population fell to 2,600 by 1956, 1,900 by 1967 and to 1,200 at the present time. The Jerban communities are amputated and their ability to reproduce themselves as a collective unit is in serious question. Outside Jerba, however, it might not be possible at all.

Following independence, the Jews accepted Tunisian schools. In the two Haras today, an increasing number of children of both sexes attend "the government school." Consequently, Jews are currently involved in three educational systems. During each day, a child passes through three schools. First, the yeshiva where the instruction is in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic, then the Tunisian public school where Arabic and also French are languages of communication, and finally, the modern Jewish school for instruction in modern Hebrew. Each school has its own language, its own curriculum and its own diploma. Nevertheless, it is traditional education which continues to govern the lives of the young. Very few of them do in fact complete the high school program of the public school. Now as before most adolescents abandon their schooling at age 14 in pursuit of a livelihood. By age 14, a boy has completed the traditional core curriculum which acquaints him with Hebrew and prayers at age 5, the Pentateuch at age 7 and religious law and the Babylonian Talmud as he reaches his teens. These studies culminate with some chapters of the tractate *Baba Mesi'a* dealing with rabbinic commercial law intended to prepare boys for their careers in the marketplace.

Because they have no post-school prospect except for marriage, Jerban girls, paradoxically, now enjoy a longer period and a higher level of education in non-religious subjects than do their brothers. Several girls have actually attained the baccalaureat, the very summit of Tunisian public school education.

The Story of Bugach Khan, Son of Dirse Khan

(From *The Book of Dede Korkut: A Turkish Epic*. Faruk Sumer, Ahmet E. Uysal, and Warren S. Walker, trans., and eds., Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1972, pp.9-22. Reprinted by permission.)

One day Bayindir, son of Gam Khan, arose and ordered that his large Damascus tent be erected. His brown parasol rose high up in the sky. Thousands of silk carpets were spread all around. It was customary for Bayindir Khan, Khan of Khans, to invite all the Oghuz princes to a feast once a year. As usual he gave a feast this year, too, and had many stallions, young male camels, and rams slaughtered for the occasion. He had three tents set up at three different places: one was white, one was red and the third was black. He ordered that whoever was without children be accommodated in the black tent, with a black felt rug under him, and that he be served the stew of the black sheep. He said, "Let him eat if he wants to eat; if he does not, let him go." He then said: "Put the man with a son in the white tent, and the man with a daughter in the red tent. The man without any children is cursed by Allah, and we curse him, too. Let this be clear to all."

The Oghuz princes began to gather one by one. It happened that a prince among them by the name of Dirse Khan had neither a son nor a daughter. He spoke to the men as follows. Let us see, my khan, what he said:

"When the cooling breeze of morning blows,
And the bearded gray lark sings his song,
And the long-bearded Persian chants the ezan,
When the Bedouin horses nicker on seeing their master,
At the time of the twilight,
When the beautiful-breasted mountains are touched by the sun—
At such a time, the warriors and gallant princes prepare for action."

Bayindir Khan's warriors welcomed Dirse Khan and asked him to go into the black tent, the floor of which was covered with a black felt rug. They placed the stew of black sheep before him and said, "My Khan, this is the order of Bayindir Khan."

Dirse Khan asked: "What fault has Bayindir Khan found in me? Is it because of my sword or my table? He has men of lower status accommodated in the white and red tents. What is my fault that I am being put in a black tent?"

They said, "My khan, today Bayindir Khan's order is as follows: 'Whoever is without a son or a daughter is cursed by Allah; we curse him too.'"

Standing up, Dirse Khan said to his men: "Rise and let us be off, my young men. The fault is either in me or in my lady."

Dirse Khan returned home, called his lady and said to her:

"Will you come here, my love, the crown of my home?
Walking along so tall, like a cypress tree,
With long black hair that falls to her feet,
With brows like a tightened bow,
With a mouth too small for two almonds,
Her red cheeks like the apples of autumn.
My melon, my lady, my love!
Do you know what happened to me?

When I reached the tents they met me and led me to the black tent, laid black felt carpet under me, and served me the stewed meat of the black sheep, saying 'The man without a son or a daughter is cursed by Allah; therefore he is cursed by us, too. Let this be known to you.' "My wife, which of us is sterile, you or I? Why does almighty Allah not give us a healthy son?" Dirse Khan then continued in song:

"O child of khan, shall I now get up
And grasp you by the throat,
And crush you beneath my hard boots?
Shall I draw my sword of black steel
And remove your head from your body,
And show you how sweet life can be?
Shall I spill your red blood on the ground?
O child of a khan, tell the reason to me;
Or I shall inflict something dreadful on you."

The wife of Dirse Khan replied:

"Oh, Dirse Khan, be not cruel to me.
Be not angry and speak so harshly to me.
But come now and have your red tent set up.
Have some stallions, some rams, and some male camels slaughtered.
Invite then the princes of Inner and Outer Oghuz.
Feed all the hungry, give clothes to the naked, and pay off the debts of the poor.
Heap up meat like a hill;
Make a lakeful of koumiss; and give a magnificent feast.
Then speak your wish. Maybe Allah will give us a healthy son,
An answer to prayers of a worthy man."

Following his lady's advice, Dirse Khan gave a large feast and then made his wish. He had stallions, young male camels, and rams slaughtered. He invited all the princes of the Inner and the Outer Oghuz to the feast. He fed the hungry, dressed the naked, and paid off the debts of the debtor; he had meat heaped up like a hill, and a lakeful of koumiss made. The princes raised their hands to the heavens and prayed. Consequently, the wish of Dirse Khan was fulfilled, and his lady became pregnant. In due time she bore a male child. She had her child brought up in the care of nurses. As the horse is quick of foot, so the minstrel is quick of tongue. As vertebrated and ribbed creatures grow fast, in the same way the son of Dirse Khan was soon fifteen years old.

One day Dirse Khan and his son went to the camp of Bayindir Khan. Bayindir Khan had a bull and a young male camel. The bull could powder harsh stones like flour with the impact of his horns. The bull and the camel were set to fight one another twice a year, once in the summer and once in autumn. Bayindir Khan and the strong Oghuz princes used to enjoy themselves watching these fights.

This bull was let out of the palace one summer day. Three men on each side were holding it with iron chains. The bull was released in the middle of a playing field, where the son of Dirse Khan was playing at knuckle bones with three other boys from the camp. When the bull was released the three other boys were told to run away. The other boys ran away but the son of Dirse Khan stood where he was. The bull ran toward the boy with the intent to kill him. The boy dealt the bull a terrific blow on the forehead, making it stagger backward. Then he pushed the bull to the edge of the playing field with his fist pressing on his forehead. There they struggled to and fro. The bull stood pressing its forelegs against the ground, while the boy kept his fist on its forehead. It was impossible to say which was the winner. The boy thought to himself: "The pole holds the tent straight. Why am I supporting this bull?" Saying so, he pulled away his fist and ran to one side, while the bull, unable to stand on its feet, crashed on the ground head downward. Then the boy cut the throat of the bull with his knife.

The Oghuz princes gathered around the boy and said: "Well done, boy! Let Dede Korkut come and name him, then take him to his father and request a principality and a throne for him."

When they called for Dede Korkut, he came. He took the young man to his father and said to him:

"O Dirse Khan!
Give this young man a principality now.
Give him a throne for the sake of his virtue.
Give him also a tall Bedouin horse
He can ride—such a capable man."

"This young man fought and killed a bull on the playing field of Bayindir Khan," continued Dede Korkut. "Therefore, let your son's name be *Bugach*. I give him his name, and may Allah give him his years of life."

Upon this, Dirse Khan gave his son a principality and a throne.

After the son had sat upon the throne for a while, he began to despise the forty young warriors of his father. As a result of this, they bore him a grudge and plotted among themselves: "Let us turn his father against him, so that he may put the son to death, and thus our esteem with the khan may continue and grow."

Twenty of these warriors went to Dirse Khan and said to him: "Do you know what has happened, Dirse Khan? Your son (may he never prosper) has become a very bad-tempered man. Taking his forty warriors, he attacked the mighty Oghuz people. When he saw a pretty girl, he kidnapped her. He insulted old men with white beards and squeezed the breasts of white-haired old women. The news of these evil deeds of your son will reach the ears of Bayindir Khan—and people will be saying, 'How could the son of Dirse Khan do such terrible things?'" The warriors then continued: "You would rather die than live. Bayindir Khan will call you to his presence and will give you a serious punishment. Such a son is not worthy of you. It is better not to have such a son. Why do you not put him to death?"

"Bring him over here. I shall kill him," said Dirse Khan.

While he was speaking his name, the other twenty treacherous young men came and gave Dirse Khan the following false information. "Your son went hunting in the beautiful mountains where he killed wild animals and birds without your permission. He brought the game to his mother. He drank strong red wine and had a good time in her company and there made up his mind to kill his father. Your son has become an evil person. The news of these deeds will reach Bayindir Khan, Khan of Khans, over Ala Mountain and people will begin to say, 'How could Dirse Khan's son do such terrible things?' They will call you before Bayindir Khan and punish you there. Such a son is not worthy of you. Why do you not kill him?"

"Bring him over here. I shall kill him. I do not want a son like him," said Dirse Khan.

His warriors said: "How can we bring your son here? He will not listen to us. Get up; take your warriors with you, call on your son and ask him to go hunting with you. Then kill him with an arrow during the hunt. If you cannot kill him in this way, you will never be able to kill him."

"When the cooling breeze of morn blows,
and the bearded gray lark sings his song,
When Bedouin horses nicker on seeing their master,
And the long-bearded Persian chants the ezan,
At the time of the twilight when girls
And brides of the mighty Oghuz wear their gorgeous gowns,
When the beautiful-breasted mountains are touched by the sun—
At such a time, the warriors and gallant princes prepare for action."

At the break of dawn, Dirse Khan arose and set out for the hunt, taking his son and forty warriors with him. They hunted wild animals and birds for a while. Then some of the treacherous warriors approached Dirse Khan's son and said to him: "Your father said, 'I want to see how my son rides, and how he uses his sword and shoots his arrow. This will make me happy and proud and will give me confidence.'"

Not knowing his father's real intention, Bugach chased the deer and drove them toward his father and killed them before him. While doing this Bugach said to himself, "Let my father see me ride and be proud; let him see me shoot my arrow and have confidence; let him see how I use my sword and rejoice."

The forty treacherous warriors then said to Dirse Khan: "Dirse Khan, do you see how he is driving the deer toward you? He means to shoot his arrow at you and kill you. Kill him before he kills you."

After the young men had driven the deer past his father several times, Dirse took out his strong bow strung with the tendon of a wolf. Standing in his stirrups, he pulled his bowstring hard and let his arrow go. He shot his son between the shoulder blades. When the arrow pierced his chest, red blood poured out, filling his shirt. He clasped his horse's neck and slipped to earth. Dirse Khan wanted to fall upon the body of his son, but his men did not allow him to do so. He then turned the head of his horse in the opposite direction and rode to his camp.

Dirse Khan's lady had decided to celebrate her son's first hunt by giving a feast to the mighty Oghuz princes, and for this purpose she had stallions, young male camels and rams killed. She now arose and taking with her the forty narrow-waisted girls of her household, went to welcome Dirse Khan. Lifting her head, she looked first at Dirse Khan, then gazed around, but nowhere could she see her dear son. She was shocked, and her heart began to beat fast. Her black eyes were filled with tears. Let us hear what she said to her husband:

"Come to me here,
The crown of my head, the throne of my house,
My khan father's son-in-law,
My lady mother's favorite,
You, who were given me by my parents,
You whom I saw when I opened my eyes,
The one whom I loved at first sight.
O Dirse Khan, you arose from your place;
You mounted the back of your stallion strong,
And hunted the mountain with beautiful breasts.
You rode off as two, but return now alone.
Where is my son whom I found in the dark of the night?
My searching eye— may it be confounded— twitches badly, Dirse Khan
My child-nursing breast— may it go quite dry— is sore.
My white skin is swollen, though bitten by no yellow snake.
My one son is lost! My poor heart is burning!
Water I poured into beds of dry rivers.
Alms I have given to black-suited dervishes.
The hungry I saw I have fed.
I had meat heaped up like a hill;
I had lakefuls of koumiss fermented,
And I managed with great travail, to bear a son.
Tell me, Dirse Khan, what befell my only son!
Say if you let our son fall down Ala Mountain out there.
Say if you let our son be carried down the fast-flowing river.
Say if you let our son be eaten by lions and tigers.
Say if you let black-dressed infidels, they of a savage faith,
Capture our son.
Let me go to my father, the khan, and take money and soldiers,
To strike at the infidels, they with the savage religion.
Let me never return from the search of my son
Before I am wounded, fall off my strong horse,
Wiping away my red blood with my sleeve,
And sprawl on the road with broken limbs.
Tell-me, O Dirse Khan, what befell my only son.
Let my luckless head be a sacrifice for you this day."

So speaking, she wept and gave voice to her sorrow. But Dirse Khan did not answer her.

Meanwhile, those forty treacherous men came along. They said to her: "Your son is safe and well. He has been hunting. He will be back today or tomorrow. Do not worry about him. He cannot speak now, because he is a bit drunk."

Dirse Khan's lady turned back, but she could not rest. With her forty slim girls, she mounted and rode in search of her son. She climbed Kazilik Mountain from which snow and ice never melt all the year round. She spurred her horse and rode in that direction.

This was the place where the young man had collapsed. When the crows had seen blood, they wanted to come down upon him, but his two dogs kept the crows from his body. When the young man had fallen there, the gray-horsed Hizir had appeared to him and, stroking his wounds three times, had said: "Do not be afraid of these wounds. You will not die of them. Mountain flowers mixed with your mother's milk will be balm to them." Having said this, he disappeared.

Then the young man's mother came upon him. Seeing her son lying there covered with blood, she addressed him with the following song. Let us see, my khan, what she said:

"Your black eyes now taken by sleep—let them open.
Your strong healthy bones have been broken,
Your soul all but flown from your frame.
If your body retains any life, let me know.
Let my poor luckless head be a sacrifice to you.
Kazilik Mountain, your waters still flow;
Let them, I pray, cease their flowing.
Kazilik Mountain, your grasses still grow;
Let them, I pray, cease their growing.
Kazilik Mountain, your deer still run fast;
Let them cease running and turn into stone.
How can I know, my son, if it was lion or tiger?
How can I know, my son? How did this accident happen to you.
If your life is still in your body, my son, let me know.
Let my poor luckless head be a sacrifice to you.

Speak a few words to me now."

As she said these things, her words entered his mind. He lifted his head, opened his eyes, and looked at his mother's face. He spoke to her. Let us see, my khan, what he said:

"Come closer, my mother,
Whose milk I once drank,
White-haired, beloved, and honorable mother
Curse not running streams;
Kazilik Mountain has done no wrong
Curse not its growing grass;
Kazilik Mountain has no sins.
Curse not its swift-running deer;
Kazilik Mountain has no fault.
Curse not the lions and tigers;
Kazilik Mountain has no guilt.
The evil and guilt all belong to my father."

The young man then went on, "Do not cry, Mother. Do not worry. This wound will not kill me. The gray-horsed Hizir came to me and stroked my wound three times, saying, 'You will not die of this wound. Mountain flowers mixed with your mother's milk will be your balm.'"

As the horse is quick of foot, so the poet is quick of tongue. My khan, the young man's wounds were healed in forty days and he recovered completely. He was once again able to ride and wear his sword, to hunt and shoot birds. Dirse Khan knew nothing of all this. He thought that his son was dead.

But his forty treacherous men soon heard of this and discussed among themselves what they should do. They said: "If Dirse Khan sees his son, he will kill us all. Let us catch Dirse Khan, tie his white hands at his back, put a rope around his white neck, and take him to the land of the infidels." They did as they had decided. They tied his white hands behind him, and they put a rope around his white neck. Then they beat him until blood oozed from his white flesh. Dirse Khan was made to walk while they accompanied him on horseback. They led him to the land of the bloody infidels. While Dirse Khan was thus a captive, the Oghuz boys knew nothing of his plight.

Dirse Khan's lady, however, learned of this. She went to her son and spoke to him. Let us see, my khan, what she said.

"Do you know what has happened my son? Not only the steep rocks but the very earth should have shaken, for although there were no enemies in our lands, your father was attacked. Those forty treacherous companions of his captured him, tied his white hands behind him, put a rope around his neck, and forced him to walk while they rode on horseback. They took him toward infidel territory. Come now, my son. Take your warriors with you and save your father from those faithless men. Go now and spare your father, even if he did not spare you."

The young man followed his mother's advice. He arose, strapped on his big steel sword, took his tight bow in one hand, and held his golden spear under his other arm. Then, as his strong horse was held, he mounted and, accompanied by his forty young men, went in pursuit of his father.

The treacherous retainers of Dirse Khan had stopped along the way and were drinking strong red wine. As Bugach Khan rode along, the forty treacherous men saw him approaching. They said, "Let us go and capture that young man and take both him and Dirse Khan to the infidels."

Dirse Khan said: "Oh, my forty companions, there is no doubt about the oneness of Allah. Untie my hands, give me a lute, and I shall persuade that young man to go back. Let me loose or kill me." They untied his hands and gave him his lute. Dirse Khan did not know that the young man was his own son. He went to him and sang.

"If the stallions have gone, let me count them my loss.
Tell me if any of yours were among them,
So that I may restore them without any fight. Turn back!
If a thousand sheep have gone from the fold, let me count them my loss.
Tell me if any of yours were among them,
So that I may restore them without any fight. Turn back!
If red camels have gone from the herd, let me count them my loss.
Tell me if any of yours are among them,
So that I may restore them without any fight. Turn back!
If some golden-topped tents have gone, let me count them my loss.
Tell me if any of yours are among them,
So that I may restore them without any fight. Turn back!
If brides with brown eyes and white faces have gone, let me count them my loss.
And if your betrothed was among them, tell me,
So that I may restore her without any fight. Turn back!
If white-bearded elders have gone, let me count them my loss.
If your white bearded father was among them, tell me,
So that I may restore him without any fight. Turn back!
If you came after me, I have killed my own son.
Young man, it is not any sin that it is yours. Turn back!"

The young man replied to the song of his father. Let us see, my khan, what he said:

"Tall stallions may count as your loss,
But one of the lost ones is mine;

I shall not give him up to the forty base men.
From the herds the red camels may count as your loss,
But some of those camels are mine;
I shall not give them up to the forty base men.
Thousands of sheep may be counted your loss,
But among them are some that are mine;
I shall not give them up to the forty base men.
The brides with brown eyes and white faces may count as your loss,
But among them is my betrothed;
I shall not give them up to the forty base men.
If the golden-topped tents may be counted your loss,
Mine too is among them;
I shall not give them up to the forty base men.
If white-bearded elders are counted your loss,
My foolish old father is also among them;
I shall not give them up to the forty base men."

He waved a handkerchief to his own forty young men, and they came and gathered around him. With their aid, he fought with the enemy. Some of these he killed and some he captured. When he had saved his father in this manner, he returned home.

Dirse Khan thus discovered that his son was alive. Bayindir Khan, Khan of Khans gave the young man a principality and a throne. Dede Korkut sang songs on the occasion and composed this legend of the Oghuz. Following this, he sang:

"Even they passed away from this world.
They stayed for a while and then moved along,
Just as the caravan does.
Even they were removed by death
While this world remained behind,
The world where men come and go,
The world which is rounded off by death."

Then he said: "When black death comes, may Allah keep you safe. May He let you rule in good health. May Almighty Allah whom I praise be your friend and keeper."

This I pray, my Khan. May your tall, steely mountains never fall. May your big shade tree never be cut down, and may your clear running waters never run dry. May your wings never be broken. May your gray horse never slip while running. May your big steel sword never be notched and may your spear never be broken in battle. May your white-haired mother's and white-bearded father's place be paradise. May Allah keep your household fire burning. May our merciful Allah never abandon you to the guile of the treacherous.

Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East

(David N. Yaghoubian, from *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, Edmund Burke III, ed., Los Angeles, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1993, pp.225-232; 235-45, 247-9; 352-62. Reprinted by permission.)

The three case studies below indicate the range of ethnicity prevalent throughout the Muslim Middle East as well as the extent to which this ethnicity affects the lives of the people.

1. Hagob Hagobian: An Armenian Truck Driver in Iran

(by David N. Yaghoubian)

The frightened Armenian boy stood in the doorway of his family's home as his mother rushed past him in a vain attempt to protect her husband as he was being attacked by a band of Kurdish men. Following the violent struggle the Kurds quickly rode away, leaving his parent's bodies in front of the farmhouse. Although Hagob Hagobian was the oldest of three brothers, at the age of seven he was far too young to understand the enormity of what had happened. Seeking help, he sadly led his smaller brother away from their farming village of Khan-Baba-Khan into the countryside of northwestern Iran. It would be many years before Hagob could begin to understand the political and ethnic ramifications of the violence that orphaned the young boys in 1916.

Hagob and his brothers found refuge at the Near East Relief Orphanage in Tabriz, the provincial capital of Azerbaijan. An American sponsored Presbyterian mission, it was home to them for the duration of their childhood. Orphaned children from other areas affected by the Armenian genocide and intercommunal violence arrived at the center almost daily. One such child, Arshalous Harutoonian, a baby girl believed to have been born in Baku, was brought to the orphanage early in 1917 and years later would become Hagob's wife.

Reza Khan (former Shah of Iran) toured Tabriz in 1924 following his rise to power, and the children of the orphanage were gathered to sing for his welcoming parade. In 1925 Reza Khan had the last Shah deposed and proclaimed himself Shah and founder of the new Pahlavi dynasty. Soon after this event, Hagob moved into a sparsely furnished room with several boys from the orphanage who at fourteen were considered old enough to support themselves.

Chosen for his capacity to work hard and his great interest in trucks, Hagob became an apprentice truck driver at sixteen. This was a prized position for a young man, as it provided some income, travel, and the opportunity to work around the rare and powerful vehicles that the master drivers piloted across the mountains to Tehran and then south to the Persian Gulf. Hagob Hagobian spent more than a year learning the specifics of the trade from his sponsoring driver in Tabriz. As an apprentice truck driver, he learned to perform daily maintenance chores, load and balance the cargo on the vehicle, and repair the vehicle under varying circumstances. Successfully completing his apprenticeship in 1927, he became a *shagaird-e-shoofer*, or driver's assistant, and began the actual driving portion of his training.

In order to become a master driver, or *arbob*, an individual had to pass a complicated and difficult licensing procedure in which he was judged on his truck-driving skills by an experienced government representative. One of the tests required that the driver maneuver the truck in reverse gear along a figure-eight-shaped path outlined by boulders. Once licensed, the driver proudly wore an insignia that represented his trade.

In 1933, after passing his driver's test and attaining the status of *arbob*, Hagob made arrangements for his marriage to Arshalous, who was now a young woman of eighteen living with a family in Tabriz, where she sewed to support herself. In a borrowed truck they drove together from Tabriz to Kermanshah, where she was introduced to Hagob's family. At the American Presbyterian mission in Kermanshah, they were married, with their best man, a fellow Armenian truck driver, and relatives in attendance.

Soon after the ceremony, Hagob and his new wife moved to the growing city of Tehran to be near the hub of the trucking and transportation industry of the country. Having no relatives with whom to share a home, as was customary in most Armenian families, Hagob and his wife made temporary arrangements to share rooms with friends from the orphanage in Tabriz who lived in Tehran. Before the birth of a son in 1934, the young couple moved into private rooms located on a narrow *koutcheh*, or alleyway, in an area of the city where some of their neighbors were other Armenian refugees from East Anatolia and Azerbaijan as well as Russian-educated Armenian professionals who had immigrated to Iran following the Bolshevik revolution. This small but growing Armenian community was affiliated with the local Armenian church. Churches became the locus of social interaction and cultural education for many in the Armenian diaspora.

Hagob began driving long-distance hauls between Tehran and the Persian Gulf and soon acquired his own truck through the assistance of his former employer. For an agreed-upon monthly payment made possible by their mutual trust, Hagob took possession of the truck immediately and repaid the debt through the truck's income.

The reign of Reza Shah (1925-41) can be seen as a turning point for the modernization of Iran, as the changes brought about during his rule, many of them a reversal of nineteenth-century trends, were indeed far-reaching and highly influential. The ideals surrounding the changes that took place were essentially threefold: a total dedication to the ideals of nationalism-statism; a desire to assert this nationalism by a rapid adoption of the material advances of the West; and an intent to break down the traditional power of religion with a growing tendency toward secularism, which would come as a result of the first two ideals. It was during this period that Reza Shah changed the name of Persia to Iran by decree.

Hagob Hagobian and his fellow truck drivers independently contracted to deliver cargo. In addition to the paid cargo, truck drivers routinely carried any item that might conceivably be required on a trip. Thus a truck driver packed authentic and makeshift replacement parts, extra sets of tires, gasoline, food, water, and personal gear...Trucks and their components were imported from abroad, and there was an acute shortage of all parts. United States- manufactured single-cab six-wheel trucks such as Hagob's 1934 International were the industry standard in Iran. The early trucks were especially vulnerable to the frigid air and ice of the mountains as well as to the desert environment, where heat and sand were brutal on the machinery. When trucks broke down, the men had to improvise ways to repair them, although they had had no formal training. Up to two full sets of spare tires might be needed during one round-trip due to the ravages of the unpaved roads.

The challenging nature of the truck-driving profession in Iran during this formative period necessitated a truck driver's involvement in a guild. The guild served a variety of crucial needs through a network of shared information and credit based on mutual trust. In the 1930s Hagob became part of a guild consisting of Armenian and Assyrian members, who maintained their ties for decades. He and the others proudly wore their guild's insignia, a jeweler's handcrafted replica of the front portion of a transport vehicle.

In addition to the physical protection that guild members found in the truck caravan, commercial bonds based on a member's spoken word were maintained, through which members could borrow money, parts, tools, and equipment. Vital information regarding the nature and availability of cargo at port, and road conditions, as well as basic communication between drivers and their families, was exchanged in an efficient network of verbal transmissions on the road. Further, guild membership served to limit and keep exclusive the truck-driving ranks and to guarantee the honesty of its members and the safety of the cargo to the cargo owners, thus establishing confidence with them. The guild was also able to help maintain a stable price structure.

Nevertheless, group involvement did not solve all of the problems associated with trucking in its initial stages. Perhaps the greatest danger of the job during an entire trip was the risk of an accident on the precarious mountain switchbacks that had to be crossed to get to and from the Gulf. Many Iranian truck drivers, including some from Hagob's guild, died as their overloaded or poorly serviced vehicles plunged down the mountainside after having made a crucial error on an ungraded turn.

Iranian truck drivers, predominantly Christian Armenians and Assyrians, enjoyed a unique status in the nation as the operators of novel and complex machines. The *tchai-khaneh* owners were Muslims, who, in Islamic tradition, provided a hospitable environment to every guest. Thus although they came from different religious backgrounds the *tchai-khaneh* owners and truck drivers formed a trusting and enduring relationship that became an integral part of the transportation industry of Iran.

Again earning a stable income Hagob repaid his debts and over the next few years began planning and saving for his son's higher education. He took advantage of a program offered by the Iranian government that paid half of the educational expenses for students who passed a qualifying examination and received an acceptance from an accredited university abroad. In 1956 Hagob sent his son to the United States to earn a university degree. In 1964, while still engaged in long-distance hauling from the Persian Gulf to Tehran, Hagob sent his daughter, accompanied by her mother, to the United States to begin her university education. A serious trucking accident near Kermanshah in 1966 forced his retirement and necessitated his wife's return from abroad to care for him. During the next decade, Hagob Hagobian and his wife were visited frequently by their adult children, who had established careers in the United States, but the continual separations were insufferable for a couple who had spent their youth as orphans. Therefore in 1975 Hagob and Arshalous Hagobian moved to the United States to be with their children's families and resettled in a California community in which Armenians in the diaspora had again established their churches, schools, and cultural centers.

2. Naji: An Iraqi Country Doctor (by Sami Zubaida)

Dr. Naji was a Jewish doctor who worked, often under adverse and difficult conditions, in the provinces of Iraq from his graduation in 1936 until the end of the 1950s. Naji was born in 1915, at the start of World War I. Many Jews, especially those educated and qualified, were conscripted. Naji's father, a pharmacist, played his part as an officer in the Turkish army. He was involved in the fighting that raged in southern Iraq between the Turkish and British forces, including the protracted Turkish siege of the British in Kut-ul-Imara. Demobilized after the Turkish defeat, Naji's father ran a canteen/snack bar for the British forces in Amara in the same region. The family was from Baghdad, where the Jewish community, long native to Iraq, inhabited particular old quarters of the city and established themselves as craftspeople, shopkeepers, peddlers, and service workers; there was also a tiny minority of prosperous businessmen, landowners, and bankers and professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and teachers. After the end of hostilities Naji's family moved back to Baghdad, where they found the population suffering from grinding poverty after the deprivations and shortages of the war years.

Religious and ethnic divisions played (and continue to play) an important role in modern Iraqi politics. An estimated 18 percent of the total population of 4.8 million in 1947 were Kurds, whose struggle for national and cultural rights has constituted a dominant factor in the history of the country to the present day. The 80 percent of the population who were Arabic-speaking were divided along religious lines into Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and included small Christian and Jewish minorities. Sunni Arabs, although a decided minority (possibly as small as 20 percent), have always been politically dominant. With the exception of the Kurds, who are Sunni, ethnicity in Iraq has tended to be ethnically coded by religious community. Most Arab nationalists have been of Sunni origin, while most Kurds and Shi'ite have tended to support Iraqi nationalist solutions and groups. In the 1950s these opposition forces came together in a common front that cooperated with the Free Officers, who initiated the 1958 revolution. The ensuing regime of Abd al-Karim Qasim was characterized by struggles between Arab nationalists and Iraqists (the latter led by the Communist party). In 1963 Qasim was in turn overthrown by another coup led by a nationalist officer. From it the current Baathist regime of Saddam al-Husain eventually emerged.

This then was the Iraq into which Naji was born. There was never an exclusive "ghetto" in Baghdad itself, although a version of the Ottoman *millet* system had been maintained by the new state of Iraq for the autonomous corporate organization of Christian and Jewish communities. Naji's family settled in a predominantly Sunni neighborhood in an old quarter of Baghdad. Their immediate neighbor was a *mullaya*, a female reader/teacher of the Qur'an, and the young Naji memorized large portions of the holy book under her tutelage. He attributed his special strength in the Arabic language to this early training, although Arabic (with a peculiar Baghdadi accent) was the native tongue of Iraqi Jews. Later, the family moved to a house in Dahhana, a Shi'ite quarter. The family was well regarded in the neighborhood with many friends on dropping-in terms.

Young Naji was sent to a Torah school to learn Hebrew and religion. He learned French at home from his mother, who had been one of the first batch of girls to go to one of the schools of the Alliance Israelite universelle, which had opened schools in Baghdad and Basra in the late nineteenth century. These schools taught in both French and Arabic, as a result of which sectors of the Jewish community were incorporated into colonially related elites. (A parallel process also operated within the Christian community.) Nonetheless, in Iraq this did not lead to a separation into colonial cultures and languages with different political orientations, as happened elsewhere in the British Empire.

Eventually Naji was educated at a Jewish primary school close to his neighborhood. His school, like all others, followed a national curriculum. All pupils who remained at school until the appropriate ages took the government *baccalaureat* examinations at different levels. Some of those who finished school then proceeded to jobs and careers in government or private employment, where they worked alongside people from other communities. Some went on to higher education in the newly opened colleges, most notably in medicine, pharmacy, and engineering, but also in law.

Naji's college days in the 1930s were marked by an atmosphere of serious dedication to the fledgling Iraqi state among the educated youth and by a sense of common purpose regardless of communal barriers. But as the decade progressed, nationalist sentiments and agitation grew, with an increasing awareness of the Palestine question and the Arab struggles in that country. The development of militant natiolialisms in Europe, especially Nazism, was an inspiration to some Arab nationalists in Iraq and elsewhere, especially insofar as it was directed against the British. This accumulation of factors brought the position of the Jews into question. These ideological trends were by no means universal, but they affected an important sector of intellectuals and army officers; this led to various attempted or temporarily successful coups d'etat, which were usually thwarted by British interests. Naji experienced changes in the political and social atmosphere in his later years at college, with some professors and students raising questions about the loyalty of the Jewish students, sometimes in whispers and sometimes openly. But the Jews also had their defenders, who maintained comradely relations and held on to the ideology of common citizenship.

The Jewish country doctor became a regular feature of the Iraqi scene in the 1930s and 1940s. A number of these country doctors, including Naji, remained in this form of service long after their compulsory contracts expired. Many pressures kept Naji in government service. His ultimate objective was to travel to Britain for further training and specialization. Financial limitations and family commitments led to constant postponement of this action. Lack of finances was also an obstacle to setting up private practice in Baghdad. In the late 1940s, things became difficult, and the government sought to prevent doctors from leaving the service by issuing a decree forcing those who resigned to practice where they last lived. It was also thought at the time that an official position would provide exemption from arbitrary arrest and political persecution.

The terms of employment of a provincial government doctor allowed him to engage in private practice in his spare time. Under these conditions Naji had no spare time. He was still expected by local notables, landlords, and officials to attend to their medical needs, for which he may or may not have been paid. At this stage he could not open a private clinic, although he managed this later in his career.

As a government doctor, Naji took his place in the society of officials and notables of the town and the region. At the top of the hierarchy was the subprefect *(qaim maqam)* of the town. (The prefect, or *mutasarrif*, lived in the provincial capital.) While the doctor was responsible to the local health directorate, which in turn answered to the ministry in Baghdad, the prefectures had considerable say in matters of health policy, premises, and facilities. so Naji also had to deal with the local bureaucracy.

Many parts of provincial Iraq included small Jewish communities among their populations. There were Jews in the Hilla province, mostly in Hilla itself. A few were merchants and landowners (although these latter tended to move to Baghdad and appoint managers to run their estates). Most were poor peddlers and craftsmen, while a few were teachers and local officials. Naji did not socialize with the local Jews. He had not made a conscious decision against it, but they were simply not his kind of people. He said of the Jews of Ana (a later posting) that they were like the local "Arabs." ("Arab" in that context meant bedouin or "native" and was used in that sense by all urbanites.) They dressed and talked and lived like other locals, and as such they were very different from Baghdadi Jews, especially the intelligentsia. As an educated man and an official, Naji had much more in common with Muslims and Christians like himself. The only provincial Jews with whom he had regular contacts were those employed by the health service, like Murad the Jew, who was the driver of the official car. Others included medical orderlies, nurses, and midwives.

Naji was an energetic and attractive young man, devoted to his work and patients, and he was warmly regarded by colleagues, subordinates, and patients, as well as by the local notables. He was a relatively high-ranking government official, and one on whom many people depended for their lives. Although he was Jewish, his professional persona and his personal qualities predominated. Shi'ite Muslims (the dominant religion in that region) observe certain taboos on contacts with non-Muslims, who are considered ritually unclean. Yet in the many years of his life in Shi'ite regions, Naji regularly treated patients, frequently shared people's food, and even slept in their houses, only encountering the observations of that taboo on rare occasions with unusual individuals. He was sought out, and occasionally entertained, by religious dignitaries as well as other notables. Once, during an epidemic, for example, Naji encountered difficulties trying to secure premises for quarantine. The landlord of the designated house tried to renege on the deal at the last minute. To obtain the key, Naji had to be very firm and exert his full authority, to the extent of slapping the man. This was not unusual conduct in the circumstances, but Naji was surprised at his own behavior: "I was a government official," he reflected. "I forgot that I was a Jew!"

While discrimination against Jews did not affect Naji in his daily life, at least not in the Hilla province, it was present in his official dealings with the Ministry and the Directorate of Health both at the provincial and central levels. As the 1930s progressed there was increasing discrimination against Jews. The Ministry of Health was more thoroughly penetrated by pan-Arab nationalists and, at that time, Nazi sympathizers than most other government departments. For Naji and other Jewish doctors, this meant confinement to the less desirable provincial postings, slow promotion in terms of salary increments, and almost a complete barrier against promotion to consultant or specialist ranks. This also meant barriers to any further training. Naji's great ambition was to travel to Britain for further training and specialization. The constraints of his contract, finances, and then the Second World War prevented the realization of this ambition.

The months of April to June of 1941 witnessed the height of the crisis in Iraq. The Rashid Ali government refused to extend the facilities for military movements that the British authorities claimed were required by treaty obligations. The British air base of Habbaniya was surrounded by units of the

Iraqi army. The pro-British regent (for the child king) and his entourage left Baghdad. The British Middle East Command drew up plans for a military campaign against the "rebel" government. Hostilities broke out in May, leading to a brief and unequal war in which British air strikes played the decisive part. British forces reached the outskirts of Baghdad in the first days of June. These were the days of the breakdown of order in Baghdad and the unleashing of the anti-Jewish pogrom known as *farhud*, in which several hundred lives were lost and many atrocities committed. It ended with the reestablishment of order under a British-controlled government and the return of the regent. These were the most dangerous months for Naji.

In the meantime Naji was very worried about his family in Baghdad. Communications were difficult even at the best of times. The local post office manager, a keen supporter of Rashid Ali, was nevertheless sympathetic to the plight of the Jewish doctor and aided him in establishing telephone contact with neighbors of his family in Baghdad, who were unharmed.

The events leading up to the partition of Palestine and the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 had negative consequences for the Jews of Iraq. There were threats of another *farhud*. Zionist societies and circles were eventually uncovered, which provided the pretext for unleashing a campaign of arrests and persecution of innocent Jews, on charges of suspicions of Zionism and Communism. The two were conveniently equated to facilitate the campaign against Communists and leftists at the same time. Jewish public servants faced added harassment, if not sacking. In 1946, at the beginning of this period, Naji received an order posting him to Rawanduz, a remote center in the Kurdish mountains of the northeast.

The disadvantages of these small town postings were not only isolation but also loss of income from private practice. At this point Naji needed the money badly. Most Jews were preparing to leave Iraq under a policy by which Jews could renounce their Iraqi nationality and eventually travel to Israel. Jews who registered on this policy were to have their assets sequestrated under a new decree issued after they registered. The result of these events was the collapse of property prices in Baghdad as Jews scrambled to sell whatever they could. Naji's father had invested the family savings, including Naji's, in building a house, which was no sooner completed than it had to be sold at an enormous loss as part of the family's plan to leave Iraq. Naji was left penniless.

After that, Naji decided to spend a few weeks resting in Amara before traveling to Baghdad. During that time, he was inundated with crowds of private patients demanding treatment. He had acquired a reputation in the area of being a miracle worker. This induced him to stay in Amara until further troubles at the end of the 1950s forced him to go to Baghdad, where he conducted a thriving private practice until the next Arab-Israeli war in 1967. The aftermath of this war and the Baathist regime inaugurated by a coup d'etat in 1968 combined to make life for the Jews very difficult. A wave of government terrorism spread in the country and the Jews were specifically targeted. Mass arrests, torture, and public hangings (on spying charges) culminated in the exodus, legally or illegally, of the few remaining Jews via Iran in 1970 and 1971. Naji was among those arrested, but his reputation and contacts saved him from the violent fate of the others. Naji left Iraq in 1970.

III. Sumaya: A Lebanese Housemaid (by Leila Fawaz)

Sumaya, now a woman in her forties, lives in an empty, half-destroyed apartment in war-torn Beirut, still serving the family she has always worked for, though they themselves have long left Lebanon. She came to them as a teen-age girl in 1960, when it was no longer easy for affluent families in the Lebanese capital to find maids from among the peasants of Mount Lebanon...The affluent families who sought them often took girls younger than their own children. Lebanese maids were considered preferable to maids from Egypt and Ethiopia...or to maids from the Philippines or Sri Lanka...

For the Lebanese maids and their families, the small-scale social structure of Lebanon was their best protection against abuses. No social security or welfare system protected domestic help; what did protect them was familiarity with one another's families and backgrounds, and sometimes even personal acquaintance. People tended to hire members of families who came from their own native region or from their religious or ethnic group...

Many of these Lebanese girls stayed with the same family for decades...it was not uncommon for its members to take care of a maid when she was sick or grew old...The shortage of Lebanese maids added to their security in the 1960s and 1970s. The few who were available could easily find generous pay and good working conditions...They had bargaining power in their dealings with their employers...

Sumaya exploited her bargaining power to the fullest to build herself a secure and pleasant nest for her family. She had been sent to work in Beirut to support herself and help support her family. Her father was burdened with the responsibility of raising four children. One of them was retarded and kept in a Maronite monastery northeast of Beirut. Sumaya almost never mentioned him. Her father had been married twice. His first marriage had produced Sumaya and another girl. When his wife died, he remarried and acquired sons, one who was the retarded boy. Sumaya was very young when her mother died and she was raised by her stepmother. She was mistrustful of people.

Sumaya's world was dominated by men. She almost never referred to her stepmother or mother, but she talked readily about her father and her brothers. She saw to the requirements of her male employers before she would concern herself with the orders of any woman...Men mattered; they made the important decisions.

Sumaya came from the Maronite village of Dakkoun, in the southern, religiously mixed district of Mount Lebanon. It is a village of a few thousand inhabitants, now occupied by

Druze. It is in a part of the Mountain where destitution is rare, but people are poor. The subsistence of many families is marginal. Little ever happened there, and when it did, it was a great event. Entertainment was provided by weddings and funerals. The outside world, particularly the political world, touched the village only rarely. Elections and civil wars were noted; otherwise the villages took no part in the struggles of the capital and other cities on the coast.

The family livelihood depended on a small plot of land on which Sumaya's father grew fruits, vegetables, and the olive trees that provided the family with oil and soap. Like the other peasants, Sumaya's father tried to be self-sufficient, but the plot did not produce enough to cover all the family's needs. Hence his decision to put his eldest daughter in service in Beirut.

...Sumaya's marriage prospects were poor. She was plain, short and very thin...her most serious drawback was the sickness that sent constant spasms through her arms and legs. The villagers thought she was epileptic and that no one would ever marry her...

When Sumaya started working, her only assets were her youth and her ability to dust and mop the floors. From the start, she struck her employers as clean, well groomed and well organized...as time passed she became very strict about routine and grumbled when she was disturbed... Sumaya was also quick and intelligent, although she used her intelligence mainly to bicker with the lady of the house. She felt bitterness about the social restriction caused by her health, the fact her father had put her in service, the separation between her and the people she worked for, as well as the children of the household who took their privilege for granted... Her intelligence also helped her improve her lot. She learned quickly and was soon doing all sorts of chores, including cooking. She would have liked to go to school, and spent hours learning the alphabet and numbers from the children...eventually she was able to write a little, take down telephone numbers, calculate bills, and read a bit...

Her poor health continued and her evil temper kept her from getting along with the noisy and demanding children or with the other servants...her attacks grew worse...her fingers freezing as she did the daily chores...One day...her hands became paralyzed. At the charity ward of the American University of Beirut hospital, she was examined by a resident, who found out that as a child she had had her thyroid and four parathyroid glands removed. It was someone's error...This diagnosis changed her life. Treated with massive doses of calcium powder, her health improved...she gained weight and felt better; she began to smile, to be friendly and self-assured.

When life began to smile on her, she began to take steps to ensure her old age. For her labor, she received the usual wages...but inflation ate away at her income. She started at a modest 60 Lebanese pounds a month (a dollar was then worth about three Lebanese pounds). Although she sent some money to her family, she was able to save. However, she put her money in the Palestinian-owned Infra Bank...a bank with branches in every major Arab city and the principal capitals of North and South America. Because of politics, there was a run on the bank in 1966...the bank collapsed and Sumaya was among the thousands of small investors who suffered.

...One of her employers helped her recover some of her losses at the Infra Bank and her savings grew...Sumaya now chose to invest in land. In 1973, she began sending money to her family to construct a small apartment for retirement next to their small house. They built it a room at a time as she saved the money. A bedroom and bathroom were completed.

Sumaya first began to show affection to pets, then children, and eventually adults. For a long time she had shown none to anyone. Then a dog named Oscar broke the ice...when he arrived she refused to feed him and gradually made everyone hope the dog would disappear. Then slowly but surely Oscar won her heart, and she became more attached to him than anything anyone could remember. Within six months, Oscar was her favorite companion and they became inseparable...she became so attached to Oscar that she refused to leave him in 1982 when the Israeli siege of West Beirut forced many inhabitants to flee...she stayed in West Beirut until the shelling drove her out but by then she could take Oscar along...they fled to the countryside until it was possible to return to Beirut.

In the meantime, the children had long since grown up and gotten married and they began to bring back their own babies. Sumaya learned to love the next generation as much as she loved Oscar...she also began to make friends.. She became particularly attached to a dressmaker in the neighborhood who was a Maronite and a janitor who was a Shi'i from the south of Lebanon.

The war in Lebanon coincided with a rewarding time in Sumaya's life. The worse Lebanon became, the better she felt. For the first time in her life she had friends and good health...this inner strength helped her cope with 13 years of relentless war. A small, determined, courageous woman, she alone guards the apartment whose owners have departed for safe havens in Europe and the United States. Daily she copes with power outages, water shortages, telephone breakdowns, shelling and bombing, news of kidnappings and death. Most of the apartments in the neighborhood are now deserted or occupied like hers by the servants of the owners. They stay to keep refugees from squatting in the apartments, which can happen the instant they are vacant.

Sumaya also helps take care of the building. Before the war, it too was very elegant; its black iron gates always stood open. Now they are always locked to keep out the marauders who roam the streets. Sumaya and her neighbors continue to wash its marble steps and its hallways and to keep the elevator clean.

At the death of the head of the house in 1976, Sumaya took charge and slowly transformed her relations with his widow to those of a companion. The two daughters had gotten married and moved away. The son then left and was in turn married in 1979. The following year he and his bride moved in with his mother when it became too dangerous to live apart and keep in touch. Through it all, Sumaya continued to take charge of most daily affairs...in 1984, when the Shi'i militia established control over West Beirut after days of terrible fighting, Sumaya, her employer, the son, the wife and the two-year-old daughter spent the night in the ironing room to best protect themselves from shelling. In the morning, Sumaya was the first to emerge to make the baby a proper meal.

Although there have been many opportunities for Sumaya to move she prefers to stay in the only neighborhood and apartment where she has roots. Although she is a Maronite woman living in a Muslim militia-dominated area, she is so at home there that the militia who surround the apartment call out their greetings to her when she goes for groceries or to clean the balconies.

As Sumaya was left alone in the apartment, the process by which she had slowly acquired responsibility for it was completed. When in 1987 a member of the family visited Beirut, she was left with the distinct impression that she was Sumaya's guest. By then, Sumaya had moved the television set into the sitting room from the kitchen but, at the same time, she never ventures into family bedrooms, continues to sleep in the attic and doesn't take advantage of the empty spacious rooms.

The war has not left her untouched. The small retirement apartment is outside her reach—the village was taken over by Druze. The savings are melting as the pound slips more and more. The rate of inflation is very high and continues unchecked, putting the simplest luxuries and even needs beyond her means.

Her own family are also refugees. Her family had to leave their town and they have never been able to return. The Druze took the village and gave out the houses to their own refugees. Sumaya's family left without any belongings but their identity cards...For some time, Sumaya was without news of them...she later learned they first found refuge in a Maronite convent near Sidon, then a few months later they were taken to a Christian-dominated area north of Beirut. From there, they reached the Christian quarter in East Beirut to live with their son. But there son is unable to take care of them and his parents share his rented room. Sumaya gives them money and occasionally makes the dangerous crossing between East and West Beirut to visit them.

Sumaya's sister has fared a little better. She married a school-bus driver but when the war came he lost his job. He emigrated to Australia and that is where they now live. None of the family have accepted her sister's offer to come to Australia.

...Sumaya's struggle with ill health helped her develop the moral qualities needed to survive the hardships of urban warfare. She exemplifies the courage and resilience of the neglected silent majority who remain in Lebanon against all odds.

An Issue of Identity
Nationalism

The Egyptian National Anthem

(courtesy of the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Cultural and Educational Bureau, Washington, D.C.)

My homeland, my homeland, my homeland
My love and my heart are for thee
My homeland, my homeland, my homeland,
My love and my heart are for thee

Egypt! O mother of all land,
You are my goal and destination,
How can one count,
The blessings of the Nile for mankind?

Egypt! Most precious jewel,
Shining on the brow of eternity,
O my homeland, live forever free
Safe from every enemy.

Egypt! Noble are thy children
Loyal, and guardians of thy soil,
In war and peace
We give our lives for thy sake.

Palace Walk

(Naguib Mahfouz, from *Palace Walk*, William Maynard Hutchins and Olive E. Kenny, trans., © 1990 by American University in Cairo Press, pp. 484-493. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., New York, NY.)

By the time Fahmy fell asleep that night he had made up his mind to get back into his father's good graces no matter what it cost him. The next morning he decided to act on his resolve without delay. Although he had never harbored any angry or defiant feelings toward his father during his rebellion, a guilty conscience was a heavy burden for his sensitive heart, which was imbued with dutiful obedience. He had not defied his father verbally but had acted against his will and had done so repeatedly. Moreover, he had refused to swear an oath the day his father had asked him to, announcing with his tears that he would stick to his principles despite his father's wishes. To his unbearable regret, all these acts had put him in the position, regardless of his good intentions, of being wickedly disobedient. He had not attempted to make peace with his father earlier from fear of scraping the scab off the wound without being able to bandage it. He had assumed his father would ask him to take the oath again as penance for what he had done and that he would be forced once more to refuse, thus reviving his rebellion when he wanted to apologize for it.

The situation today was different. His heart was intoxicated with joy and victory, and the whole nation was drunk on the wine of delight and triumph. He could not stand for a barrier of suspicion to separate him from his father a moment longer. They would be reconciled and he would receive the pardon he craved. Then there would be true happiness, unblemished by any defect.

He entered his father's room a quarter of an hour before breakfast and found his father folding up the prayer rug as he mumbled a prayerful entreaty. The man no doubt noticed him but pretended not to and went to sit on the sofa without turning toward his son. He sat facing Fahmy, who stood at the door, looking ashamed and confounded. Al-Sayyid Ahmad stared at him impassively and disapprovingly as though to ask, "Who is this person standing there and why has he come?"

Fahmy got the better of his consternation and quietly walked toward his father. He leaned over his hand, which he took and kissed with the utmost respect. He was silent for some time. Then in a scarcely audible voice he said, "Good morning, Papa."

His father continued to gaze at him silently, as though he had not heard the greeting, until the boy lowered his eyes in confusion and stammered in a despairing voice, "I'm sorry..." Al-Sayyid Ahmad persisted in his silence.

"I'm really sorry. I haven't had a moment's peace of mind since..." He found his words were leading him up to a reference to something he wanted with all his heart to skip over. So he stopped.

Before he knew what was happening, his father asked him harshly and impatiently, "What do you want?"

Fahmy was overjoyed that the man had abandoned his silence and sighed with relief as though he had not noticed the harsh tone. He entreated his father, "I want your approval."

"Get out of my sight."

Feeling the grip of despair loosening a little around his neck, Fahmy said, "When I have your approval."

Becoming sarcastic suddenly, Al-Sayyid Ahmad asked, "My approval!...Why not?... Have you, God forbid, done anything to make me angry?"

Fahmy welcomed his father's sarcasm twice as much as his renunciation of silence. Sarcasm with his father was the first step toward forgiveness. When he was really angry, he would slap, punch, kick, curse, or do all at once. Sarcasm was the first sign of a change of heart.

"Seize the opportunity," Fahmy told himself. "Speak. Speak the way a man preparing to be a lawyer should speak. This is your opportunity. Say, 'Answering the call of the nation should not be considered rebellion against your will, sir. I really didn't do much by way of patriotic deeds...distributing handbills to friends... What did that amount to? What am I compared with those who willingly gave their lives? I understood from your words, sir, that you were afraid for my life, not that you really rejected the idea of patriotic duties. I simply did a little of my duty. I'm confident that I actually did not disobey your wishes.'... And so forth and so on."

Then Fahmy's sister says, "God knows it never occurred to me to disobey you."

Al-Sayyid Ahmad responded sharply, "Empty words. You pretend to be obedient now that there's no reason to rebel. Why haven't you asked for my approval before today?"

Fahmy said sadly, "The world was full of blood and grief. I was preoccupied by sorrow."

"Too preoccupied to ask for my approval?"

Fahmy replied ardently, "I was too preoccupied to think about myself." In a low voice he added, "I can't live without your approval."

Al-Sayyid Ahmad frowned, not from anger as he made it appear, but to hide the good impression his son's words had made on him. "This is the way a person should speak," he reflected. "Otherwise, forget it. He's really good at using words. This is eloquence, isn't it?" I'll repeat what he said to my friends tonight to see what impact it makes on them. What do you suppose they'll say? The boy takes after his father... That's what they ought to say. People used to tell me that if I had completed my education I would have been one of the most eloquent attorneys. I'm quite an eloquent person even without a higher education and a law practice. Our daily conversation is exactly like the law in revealing one's gift for eloquence. How many attorneys and important civil servants have cowered like sparrows one day. They'll laugh and say the boy's really a chip off the old block. His refusal to swear that oath still troubles me, but don't I have a right to be proud that he participated in the revolution, even if only remotely? Since God has allowed him to live to see this day, I wish he had done something important in it. From now on, I'll say he waded into the midst of the revolution. Do you think he was content just to distribute handbills as he claimed? The son of a bitch threw himself into the bloody stream of events. 'Al-Sayyid Ahmad, we must acknowledge your son's patriotism and courage. We did not wish to tell you this during the danger, but now that peace has come, there's no harm saying it.' Do you disown your patriotic feelings? Didn't the people collecting donations for the nationalist Wafd Party commend you? By God, if you were young, you would have done much more than your son has. But he defied me! He defied your tongue and obeyed your heart. What can I do now? My heart wishes to forgive him, but I'm afraid he'll think then that its okay to disobey me."

He finally spoke: "I can never forget that you disobeyed me. Do you think the meaningless oration you have delivered this morning, before I even had breakfast, can influence me?"

Fahmy started to speak, but his mother entered at that moment to announce, "Breakfast is ready, sir."

She was astonished to find Fahmy there. She looked from one to the other and tarried a little in hopes of hearing part of what was being said. But the silence, which she was afraid her arrival had caused, made her leave the room quickly. Al-Sayyid Ahmad rose to go to the dining room, and Fahmy moved out of his way. The boy's intense sorrow was evident to his father, who hesitated a few moments before finally saying in a conciliatory voice, "I hope that in the future you won't insist on being so stupid when you address me."

He walked off, and the young man followed after him with a grateful smile. As they went through the sitting room he heard his father say sarcastically, "I suppose you put yourself at the head of those who liberated Sa'd."

Fahmy left the house happy. He went at once to al-Azhar, where he met with his colleagues on the supreme student committee. They were discussing arrangements for the enormous, peaceful demonstrations the authorities were allowing so that the nation could express its delight. It had been decided that representatives of all segments of the population would participate.

The meeting lasted quite a while. Then the participants separated, each going off about his business. Fahmy rode over to Ramses Square in front of the central railroad station, after learning of his assignment to supervise the groups of students from the secondary schools. Although the tasks he was customarily assigned could be considered rather secondary, compared with those of the others, he undertook them with precision, care, and joy, as though each was the happiest moment of his life. Even so, his industry was accompanied by a slight feeling of discontent, which he did not share with anyone else originating from his conviction that he was less daring and forward than his other comrades. Yes, he had never hesitated to attend a demonstration the committee supported but he became discouraged when the trucks carrying soldiers appeared, especially once shots were fired and victims started to fall. One time he had sought refuge in a coffee shop, trembling. Another time he had run so far he ended up in the cemetery for theology students. What was he compared with the man who had carried the flag in the Bulaq demonstration, or massacre, as it had come to be called? That fellow had died a martyr, clasping the flag with his hands, standing his ground at the head of the procession, shouting at the top of his lungs for everyone to stand firm. What was Fahmy compared with that martyr's companions who had rushed to raise the flag again to be shot down around him with their breasts decorated heroically by bullet holes? Heroic acts appeared to him to be so dazzling and magnificent that they were breathtaking. He frequently heard an inner voice daring him to imitate the heroes, but his nerves had always let him down at the decisive moment. When the fighting started, he would regain his determination to double his efforts to struggle tenaciously, but with a tortured conscience, an anxious heart, and a limitless desire for perfection. He would console himself at times by saying, "I'm just an unarmed warrior. Even if stunning deeds of heroism have passed me by, it's enough that I've never hesitated to throw myself into the thick of the fray."

On his way to Ramses Square, he began to observe the streets and vehicles. It appeared that everyone was heading his way: students, workers, civil servants, and ordinary folk, riding or walking. They had a relaxed look about them, appropriate for people going to a peaceful demonstration sanctioned by the authorities. He too felt the way they did. It was not the same as when he had searched for the appointed place with an excited soul and a heart that pounded hard whenever he thought about perishing. That was in a former time. Today he went along, feeling secure, with a smile on his lips. Was the struggle over? Had he emerged from it safely with no losses or gains? No gains?...If only he had suffered something like the thousands who had been imprisoned, beaten, or wounded slightly by gunfire.

"Do you deny you're happy that you're safe? Would you have preferred to be a martyr? Certainly not... Would you have liked to be one of those wounded but not killed? Yes. That was in your reach. Why did you recoil from it? There was no way to guarantee that the wound wouldn't be fatal or the imprisonment temporary. You don't regret your current deliverance, but you wish you had been afflicted in some way that wouldn't interfere with this happy ending. If you ever engage in another struggle like this again, you had better have your fortune told. I'm going to a peaceful demonstration with a calm heart and an uneasy conscience."

He reached the square around one o'clock. It was two hours before the demonstration was due to commence. He took his place at the spot assigned to him, the door of the railroad station. There was no one in the square except for supervisory personnel and scattered groups from various religious factions. The weather was mild, but the April sun poured down on those exposed to its scorching rays. He did not have to wait, for groups began to throng into the square from the different streets leading to it. Each group went to the location where its banner was displayed. Fahmy set to work with pleasure and pride. Although the task was simple, consisting of nothing more than the organization of each of the schools behind its banner, Fahmy was filled with pride and conceit, especially since he was supervising many students who were older than he was. His nineteen years did not seem like much in a mass of students with twisted mustaches going on twenty-two or twenty-four.

He noticed eyes that were looking at him with interest and lips that were whispering about him. He heard his name, accompanied by his title, being repeated by some tongues: "Fahmy Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, representative of the supreme committee." That touched the strings of his heart. He pressed his lips together to keep them from smiling, out of concern for his dignity. Yes, he must look the part of a representative of the supreme committee by being serious and stern, as was only proper for the elite corps of young freedom fighters. He had no desire to discourage them but was stung by the unvarnished truth. He had distributed handbills and been part of the rear guard. That was all he had been. Today he was entrusted with supervision of the secondary schools and had a leadership role. Did the others think he had played a more important part than he did himself? How much respect and affection they were awarding him...

"Oratory? There was not need for you to deliver speeches, isn't that so? You can be great without being an orator, but what a pity it will be for you on the day the supreme committee appears before the great leader if, when the orators try to out do each other, you take refuge in silence. No, I won't remain silent. I'll speak. I'll say exactly what I feel, whether or not I excel at it. When will you stand before Sa'd? When will you see him for the first time and feast your eyes on him? My heart is pounding and my eyes long to weep. It will be a great day. All of Egypt will come out to welcome him. What we're doing today will be like a drop of water in the sea compared with that time. O Lord! The square's full. The streets feeding into it are full: Abbas, Nubar, al-Faggala. there's never been a demonstration like this before. A hundred thousand people, wearing modern fezzes and traditional turbans—students, workers, civil servants, Muslim and Christian religious leaders, the judges ... who could have imagined this? They don't mind the sun. This is Egypt. Why didn't I invite Papa? Yasin was right... A person forgets himself in a crowd of people. He rises above himself. What are my personal ambitions? Nothing. How my heart is pounding. I'll talk about this for a long time tonight and after that too. Do you suppose Mama will tremble with fear once again? It's a magnificent spectacle, which humbles a person and calms him. I would like to be able to gauge its impact on those devils. Their barracks overlook the square. Their cursed flag is fluttering in the wind. I see heads in the windows there. What are they whispering to each other? The sentry's like a statue, seeing nothing. Your machine guns did not stop the revolution. Do you understand that? Soon you'll be seeing Sa'd return victoriously to this square. You exiled him by force of arms and we are bringing him back without any weapons. You'll see, before you evacuate."

The enormous parade began to move. Successive waves rolled forward, chanting patriotic slogans. Egypt appeared to be one great demonstration... united in one person and a single chant. The columns of the different groups stretched out for such a long distance that Fahmy imagined the vanguard would be approaching Abdin Palace before he and his group had budged from their position in front of the railroad station. It was the first demonstration that machine guns had not interrupted. No longer would bullets come from one side and stones from the other.

Fahmy smiled. He saw that the group in front of him was starting to move. He turned on his heels to direct his own personal demonstration. He raised his hands and the lines moved in anticipation and with enthusiasm. Walking backward, he chanted at the top of his lungs. He continued his twin tasks of directing and chanting until the beginning of Nubar Street. Then he turned the chanting over to one of the young anxious men surrounding him. He turned around once again to walk facing forward. He craned his neck to look at the procession. He could no longer see the front of it. He looked on either side to see how crowded the sidewalks, windows, balconies, and roofs were with all the spectators who had begun to repeat the chants. The sight of thousands of people concentrated together filled him with such limitless power and assurance it was like armor protecting him, clinging tightly to him so that bullets could not penetrate.

Now the police force was helping to maintain order, after they had been unable to suppress the demonstrations by their attacks. The sight of these men going back and forth on their horses, like guards associated with the demonstration, delegated to assist it, was the most eloquent proof of the victory of the revolution. The chief of police! ...Was that not Russell Bey? Of course, he recognized him perfectly. There was his deputy trotting along behind him, looking at everything impassively and haughtily as though protesting silently against the peace reigning over the demonstration. What was his name? How could he forget a name that everyone had been repeating during the bloody, dark days? Did it not begin with a *g* or a *j*? "Ja...Ju...Ji..." He could not recall it. "Julian!" Oh, how did that hated name slip into his mind? It fell on him like dirt, putting out the fire of his zeal. "How can we respond to the call of zeal and victory when the heart is dead? My heart dead? It wasn't dead a minute ago. Don't surrender to sorrow. Don't let your heart become separated from the demonstration. Haven't you promised yourself to forget? In fact, you really haven't forgotten. Start chanting again to shake off this dusty cloud of regret."

Fahmy's own part of the demonstration slowly approached Ezbekiya Garden. The lofty trees could be seen over the banners that were displayed all along the street. Then Opera Square was visible in the distance looking like an endless mass of heads that all seemed to spring from a single body. He was chanting forcefully and enthusiastically, and the crowd repeated his chants with a sound that filled the air like the rumble of thunder. When they came near the wall of the garden, suddenly there was a sharp, resounding pop. He stopped chanting and in alarm looked around questioningly.

It was a familiar sound that had often assaulted his ears during the past month and had frequently echoed in his memory during the quiet nights, although he had never gotten used to it. The moment it rang out he became pale and his heart seemed to stop pumping.

"A bullet?"

"Incredible. Didn't they sanction the demonstration?"

"Did you forget to allow for treachery?"

"But I don't see any soldiers."

"Ezbekiya Garden is an enormous camp, packed full of them."

"Perhaps the explosion was an automobile tire blowing out."

"Perhaps."

Fahmy listened intently to what was going on around him without regaining his peace of mind. It was only a few moments before a second explosion was heard. "Oh... There could no longer be any doubt. It was a bullet like the one before. Where do you suppose it hit? Isn't it a day of peace?"

He felt the uneasiness moving through the ranks of the demonstrators, coming from the front like the heavy wave that a steamboat plowing down the center of a river sends to the shore. Then thousands of people started to retreat and spread out, creating in every direction insane and unruly outbursts of confusion and consternation as they collided with each other. Terrifying shouts of anger and fear rose from the masses. The orderly columns were quickly scattered and the carefully arranged structure of the parade collapsed. Then there was a sharp burst of shots in close succession. People screamed in anger and moaned in pain.

The sea of people surged and swelled, and the waves thrust through every opening, sparing nothing in its way and leaving nothing behind it.

"I'll flee. There's no alternative. If the bullets don't kill you, the arms and feet will." He meant to run or retreat or turn, but he did not do anything. "Why are you standing here when everyone has scattered? You're in an exposed position. Flee."

His arms and legs began a slow, limp, disjointed motion. "How loud that clamor is. But what are they screaming about? Do you remember? How quickly memories are slipping away. What do you want? To chant? What chant? Or just call out? To whom? For what? There's a voice speaking inside you. Do you hear? Do you see? But where? There's nothing. Nothing. Darkness and more darkness. A gentle motion's pushing with the regularity of the ticking of a clock.

The heart is flowing with it. There's a whisper accompanying it. The gate of the garden. Isn't that so? It's moving in a fluid, rippling way and slowly dissolving. The towering tree is dancing gently. The sky ...the sky? High, expansive...nothing but the calm, smiling sky with peace raining from it.

Dramatic Reversals
Political Islam and Egyptian Television

(Lila Abu-Lughod, from forthcoming book *Political Islam*, Joel Beinin & Joe Stor, eds., Berkeley, CA: University of California Press Reprinted by permission.)

Walk the streets of Cairo or village lanes in Egypt any early evening and you will see the flicker of television screens and hear the dialogue and music of the current serial (*musalsal*). Read the newspapers and you will find articles and cartoons that can only be understood if one is following these televised dramas. The serials, each usually composed of 15 episodes aired on consecutive days, seem to set the very rhythms of national life. Extensive access to television and limited broadcast hours and channels mean that the audience will likely include a majority of Egyptians.

If the serials produce a national community, and television in Egypt, as in many Third World countries, is state-controlled, how does the entertainment provided to these large audiences mesh with national politics and policies? Although debate and talk shows airing political views take up some broadcast time on Egyptian television, much more popular, and thus perhaps influential, are the melodramatic serials. Meant to entertain, they are by no means free of political messages.

...A look at key serials of the late 1980s and early 1990s reveals that although the writers and producers of the most sophisticated of the Egyptian serials have a certain independence from the government (reflected in the social criticism characteristic of their productions), they nevertheless participate in a shared discussion about nationhood and citizenship. This consensus is most directly presented in the changing treatment of the place of religion, one of the most political contests in Egypt today.

The dynamic between the secular television producers and the forces of "religious extremism" has played itself out in the popular serials in different ways in the 1980s and the 1990s. With one important exception, the controversial "Hilmiyya Nights," the serials of the 1980s maintain a noticeable silence on the Islamist movements and deliberately ignore the other vision these movements offer of Islam's place in Egypt's future—for specific political reasons. This changes dramatically in the 1990s when a policy of using media to combat "terrorism" is put into place.

What may be unique about these two popular serials is that they personify (stand for) morality and immorality between two social classes, not by the contrast between tradition and modernity. One class consists of those who took advantage of the economic liberalization and "opening" that Anwar al-Sadat initiated in the 1970s. These people are portrayed in the serials as fat cats who drive around in the latest model Mercedes while others cannot afford to marry; there are those who wear fancy suits and sit in glass and steel office buildings, dealing in construction, taking and offering bribes, and embezzling while others are unemployed. The young people of this class are spoiled and self-centered, dazzled by money and glamour, trying to become movie stars, pop singers and boutique owners.

The other class consists of educated professionals—not just irrigation engineers and diplomats, but lawyers, architects, doctors, medical students, university students, philosophy teachers, school principals, responsible journalists, serious artists and translators. Some have risen from the bottom of society through education; others have been comfortable all their lives. The qualities they share are honesty and concern for others and for society.

What is startling in these works...is the absence of religion as a source of morality, and the avoidance of overt (outward) signs of Muslim piety and identity in the protagonists (heros). Silence on the Islamist movement as a modern alternative is broken only to mock. The villainess of "The White Flag" wears clothes that are a corruption of the new Islamic modest dress that has become a fashionable sign of piety. Her head is wrapped "modestly" in a turban and she carries the title (*hagga*) of someone who has been on the pilgrimage to Mecca. But her turbans are of gold lamé sometimes further graced by brightly-colored pompons. Her speech is crude. The gaudy plaque of religious calligraphy that decorates her office is overshadowed by a huge television set and a photograph of herself smoking a water pipe. Nothing in her behavior suggests genuine piety. There is a stark contrast between what the fashionably outfitted bareheaded actresses wear in the serials and what real urban women, educated and semi-educated women on the streets, in schools, in health clinics and in offices (including those of the Union of Television and Radio itself) are more often than not wearing—the *hijab* and full-length modest Islamic dress.

This is not to say that religious programming on television did not exist; there was an increasing amount of it in the 1980s. But it was generally kept segregated from the more popular shows, especially the serials. Qur'an recitations open and close the television day; the call to prayer interrupts programming; there are numerous religious discussions and programs; the Friday mosque prayers are televised; there are even religious television serials—heavy and stilted historical costume dramas about the early days of Islam, always in the classical Arabic that few people fully understand and fewer speak.

Television was introduced to Egypt in 1960 under Gamal Abd al-Nasir and used, along with radio, as an instrument of national development and political mobilization. Many urban intellectuals within the television industry, people like Fadil and 'Ukasha who came of age during the Nasir period, see their vision of modernity and progress under threat today from both the newly wealthy and the religious groups. Their serials uphold the secular national institutions of the postcolonial state, promote the ideals of informed citizenship, and deplore what they view as abuses of basically good institutions like the law, government, education and the family. Although somewhat controversial, the social criticism they offer remains within the bounds of the familiar paradigms of the official political parties.

Not so for the Islamists. They speak directly to the same corruption and consumerism the serials depise. In their meetings, pamphlets, magazines and Friday sermons in the thousands of private mosques for which the Ministry of Religious Endowments cannot provide preachers, they offer an alternative path to modernity—a path that rejects the West and the secular nationalist vision that derives from it, as well as those Egyptians who have associated themselves with the west. This alternative vision has widespread appeal in part because it seems to offer people a moral way to deal with the times.

What Fadil, Ukasha and other television professionals appeared to be opposing in excluding the Islamist vision from the serials during this period, was not the value of religious faith and piety but the place where Muslim discourse was relevant. The segregation of religious and popular programming produces a sense of the separation of the areas, declaring the irrelevance of religion in the public domain of political development, economic progress and social responsibility. The same television professionals who refuse or are unable to portray the appeal of the Islamist vision, or who criticize it openly, may be personally pious. But they carefully construct boundaries rejected by the Muslim activist groups.

An upsurge of interest in the Nasir period is noticeable in a number of the popular serials aired during the last few years. "Hilmiyya Nights," an extremely popular serial written by 'Ukasha and shown during the month of Ramadan for each of five years beginning in the late 1980s, is an epic of modern Egyptian history that follows the rich and poor families of Hilmiyya, a popular quarter in Cairo, from the days of King Faruk to the present. Its positive depiction of Nasir and the period before Sadat was controversial. In 1990, for example, every major periodical carried stories and editorials condemning or defending the serial.

The 1990s marked a shift in media treatments of the Islamists. Still mostly excluded from producing for television, they were no longer to be ignored. Most striking was the fact that the silence on them in the popular serials was broken...the writer Usama Anwar Ukasha actually included a subplot organized around a "religious extremist."

The negative depiction of an extremist no doubt met favor with the censors, who try to keep productions in line with government interests. Their goal seems to be to discredit Islamists by showing them to be not only misguided but hypocrites or agents of foreign powers.

Although excluded from official media production and, at least since the 1990s, depicted negatively in popular evening serials, the Islamists may be influencing television in Egypt by encouraging the broadcasting of more religious programming. These programs are relatively uncontroversial and actually helpful in allowing the state and its media to appropriate religious correctness for itself. It is obvious to all that current serial plots avoid the kinds of moral and sexual dilemmas that animated Egyptian films of previous eras.

Poetry and Nationalism

Poetry, like prose and other writing genres, can also serve as a political vehicle. In the Muslim Middle East, the tradition of poetry is strong throughout the region. During the early nationalistic movements, poetry was an excellent technique for the writer to employ to excite the reader. In addition, the use of the poetic form rather than a polemic and didactic tract, was recognized as a legitimate method of expression.

In the 19th century there was a remarkable literary awakening in the Muslim world. In Egypt and Syria there was a strong call for the revival of Classical Arabic. At the same time, other writers were convinced that the nationalistic ideals of their nation could best be served through the creation of a secular society, a society accepting of the ideas and influences of the West.

Specifically, in Egypt, Ahmed Shauki, a man with a classical education wrote a stirring poem which blends the nationalistic ideology with the Islamic tradition. This poem is still taught in Egyptian classrooms today:

Knowledge and Teaching and the Teacher's Task

(Ahmed Shauki, *Modern Arabic Literature: 1800-1970*, John A. Haywood, ed., New York, New York: St. Marten's Press, pp. 89-90.)

Rise to the teacher! Give him his due of high respect:
The teacher is almost an apostle, an elect!
Are there men nobler or more glorious you can find
Than those who make and mold the character and mind?
Glory to you, oh God, the best Teacher of men;
You taught the earliest ages how to use the pen.
This human mind you drew from out its darkness drear,
Guiding it on the road towards the brightness clear.
You forged it by the teacher's hand, at times uncouth
As rusty steel; at other times you left it polished smooth.
Moses you sent to guide—the Pentateuch he brought;
And spotless Mary's son, he who the Gospel taught.
Muhammed, as a spring of eloquence you cleav'd.
He poured forth the Tradition, the Koran received.
You educated Greece and Egypt, and you let
Them turn aside from every sun which fain would set:
Today both lands have reached a state of childishness
In knowledge, which they seek with childish eagerness.
From Eastern lands earth's brightest suns came first to view;
Why should control of them to Western lands accrue?
Oh World! Since first the teacher, stranded, lost his way,
Amidst these suns in Eastern lands, and went astray,
Those who defended truth in knowledge, for it bore
ire punishment with steadfastness, they are no more!
...Those who are brave of heart are of a common kind,
But rarely do you find men who are brave of mind!

At this point, the poet refers to how the British educational reforms for Egypt brought about defective education:

Nor Dunlop (the British Commissioner), nor the education he brought in
Were worth, in times of dire distress, a date-stone's skin.
And when the women grow up in illit'racy,
The men impose ignorance and obscurity.

The next verse refers to the opening of the first Egyptian parliament on Saturday, March 15, 1924:

Egypt, if she went back to times long passed away,
Would never find the likes of that great Saturday.
Tomorrow, Parliament will spread its canopy,
A shady shelter o'er the happy Nile 'twill be.
If education rouses its anxiety,
May parliament to this land be not niggardly.

How distant thee objectives! Yet I see, indeed,
Your steadfastness is amply guaranteed.
Entrust success to God and persevere, for He
Is the best surety for you and the best trustee.

Egypt's Complaint Against the British Occupation

(Hafiz Ibrahim, *Modern Arabic Literature: 1800-1970*, John A. Haywood, ed., New York, New York: St. Marten's Press, pp. 93.)

Hafiz Ibrahim, a contemporary of Shauki, used poetry to state his nationalistic feelings:

Oppression was rampant among us, till its outward expression
Was corrected, then it merely became organized oppression.
Today you may recall your favours, in that wealth was multiplied,
And that Egyptians have become free, with good things supplied.
I say, Bring back Ismail's days, with their flogging and forced labor.
I find worse wounds and pains inflicted on us by your favour.
Things you have striven to set right—on us insults to heap;
Land you have priced too high-blood you have made

you cheap.
When the earth is fertile, but its folks are distressed.
It produces no plants, and with heaven's rain is not blessed.

Today, poetry is still a popular and valuable nationalistic tool. The following poets, continuing in a traditional literary vein, speak out for independence and liberty.

The Identity Card

(by Mahmoud Darwish, a Palestinian poet and Arab nationalist. From *Splinters of Bone*, B.M. Bennani, trans., Greenfield Center, N.Y: The Greenfield Review Press, 1974. Reprinted by permission.)

Register me.
I'm an Arab.
—Card number?
Fifty thousand.
—Children?
Eight. The ninth
Will be born next summer.
—Are you angry?
Register me.
I'm an Arab.
—Vocation?
Stone-cutter.
I must cut bread
And clothes and books
For the children.
You know, I'll never beg at your door.
I'm an Arab.
—Are you angry?

Register me.
I'm an Arab.
Color of hair: jet black.
Eyes: brown

Distinguishing marks:
***Kuffiya** and **ighal** on my head*
And hands baked hard like rock.
Favorite food: olive oil and wild thyme.
Address: a forgotten quiet village
Where streets have no names
And men work in fields and quarries.

I'm nameless
And patient despite my anger.
I struck roots here
Long before the olive trees and poplars.
I'm a descendant of the plow pushers;
My ancestor was a peasant;
My home is a hut of mud.
You've stolen all my vineyards
And the land I used to till.
You've left nothing for my children
Except the rocks.
But I've heard
You'll take away
Even the rocks.

Then register this first:
I hate nobody
And I don't steal.
But if I'm made hungry
I'll eat the flesh of my oppressor.
Beware of my hunger and anger!

Lover From Palestine

(by Mahmoud Darwish, a Palestinian poet and Arab nationalist. From *Splinters of Bone*, B.M. Bennani, trans., Greenfield Center, N.Y: The Greenfield Review Press, 1974. Reprinted by permission.)

But I am the exile.
Seal me with your eyes.
Take me whereever you are—
Take me whatever you are.
Restore to me the color of face
And the warmth of body,
The light of heart and eye,
The salt of bread and rhythm,
The taste of earth...The Motherland.
Shield me with your eyes.
Take me as a relic from the mansion of sorrow;
Take me as a verse from my tragedy;
Take me as a toy, a brick from the house
So that our children will remember to return.

Her eyes are Palestinian;
Her name is Palestinian;
Her dreams and sorrows;
Her veil, her feet and body;
Her words and silence are Palestinian;
Her birth...her death.

In The Arab Maghreb

(Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, *Political Trends in 20th century Arab Poetry*, Ali Awad, ed., Beirut: Dar Al-Kalemah, 1974.)

Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, (1926-1964) was an Iraqi poet considered one of the greatest poets in Arabic literature. His experiments helped to change the course of modern Arabic poetry. He launched the free verse movement, and was instrumental in drawing attention to the use of myth in poetry. He revolutionized all the elements of the poem and wrote highly involved political and social poetry, along with many personal poems. He started his career as a Marxist, but reverted to mainstream nationalism without ever becoming fanatical.

I have read my name on a rock.
Between two names in the desert
the world of the living drew breath,
as blood flows from heartbeat to heartbeat
From a red tablet of fired clay
standing over a pit
blood
illuminated the features of the land
steadily
naming it
that it may take its meaning

So I know it is my land
So I know it is part of me
know it is my past
that without this land my past is dead
without this past I am dead, walking with her dead.
Is it ours, tumultuous valley teeming with banners?
Is this the color of our past
lit by the windows of al-Hamra
and by a green tablet of fired clay,
God's name on it, written by the lifeblood that
remains to us?
Is this the sound of the dawn prayer
or is it the chant of the revolutionaries?

Abd al-Latif `Aql: "Love Palestinian-style"

(Barbara McKean Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature*, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1994, p. 83, and *The Palestinian Wedding: A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Palestinian Resistance Poetry*, A.M. Elmessiri, trans., Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1982, pp. 117-119. Permission granted by Donald E. Herdeck, Three Continents Press.)

In times of drought you are my figs and olives.
Your barrenness is my fragrant gown.
Of the rubble that was your eyes I erect my home.
I love you alive, I love you in death.
When I am led all alone
To be whipped and humiliated,
And lashed at every police station,
I feel we're lovers who died from ecstasy.
A dark-skinned man and his woman.
You become me and I become you—
Luscious figs and shelled almonds.
And when soldiers smash my head
And force me to sip the cold of prison
To forget you—I love you even more.

Palestine's Children

(Ghassan Kanafani, from *Palestine's Children*, Barbara Harlow Heinemann, trans., London, Cairo: Three Continents Press, pp. IV-V, VII-IX, 62-4, 67-8. Permission pending.)

In 1948, as the result of the United Nations partition of Palestine, many Arabs fled the region, making new homes for themselves in refugee camps. Kanafani's stories are stories of mothers in the refugee camps who proudly send their sons to the fidayeen and who then visit them in the mountains with gifts of food from home; stories of fathers whose role of authority within the family is being threatened by the transformations in their social world; stories of children who learn early to fight for a place in that social order, of concern and love and fear and suspicion among neighbours who feel threatened by strangers in their land.

Each of his stories involves in some way a child, a child who, though he is victimized by the structures of authority which dominate the social and political world he lives in, nonetheless, by assuming new roles, participates personally in the struggle towards a new and different kind of future...The stories are told from the point of view of the children of Palestine by a writer who was long involved with their education and development. Kanafani, who attended the UNWRA schools for Palestinian refugees in Damascus after he left Palestine with his family in 1948, later became a teacher in those same schools. The years he spent as a student and teacher were to have a significant effect on his subsequent development as a writer, an effect which he himself acknowledged.

In telling these stories, stories of the Palestinian people and their children, Kanafani is retelling their history and re-establishing its chronology. Of his own relationship to literature and politics, Kanafani has said. "My political position springs from my being a novelist. In so far as I am concerned, politics and the novel are an indivisible case and I can categorically state that I became politically committed because I am a novelist, not the opposite. I started writing the story of my Palestinian life before I found a clear political position or joined any organization."

It was war-time. Not war really, but hostilities, to be precise ... a continued struggle with the enemy. In war, the winds of peace gather the combatants to repose, truce, tranquillity, the holiday of retreat. But this is not so with hostilities which are always never more than a gunshot away, where you are always walking miraculously between the shots. That's what it was, just as I was telling you, a time of hostilities.

I lived with seven brothers, all of them strong. Father didn't much care for his wife, but this may have been because she had borne him eight children during a time of hostilities. Then there was our aunt and her husband and five children who also lived with us. And our old grandfather. Whenever he found five piastres on the table or in the pocket of one of the many pairs of pants which would be hanging up, he went straight out and bought a newspaper. As you know, he couldn't read, so in order to find out what was being done, he had to have one of us read aloud to him the latest bad news.

Isam and I were ten years old. He was a little bigger than I was, and still is, and he considered himself the leader of his brothers, my cousins, just as I consider myself the leader of my brothers. After long efforts, my father and my aunt's husband finally found a daily task for us. Together we were to carry a big basket and walk for about an hour and a quarter until we came to the vegetable market sometime in the afternoon. You don't know what the vegetable market was like: the shops were beginning to close their doors and the last of the trucks loaded with what was left from the day were getting ready to leave the crowded street. Our job-mine and Isam's-was easy and difficult at the same time. We had to find stuff to fill our basket. From in front of the shops or behind the cars. Even from the tops of tables if the owner happened to be taking a nap or was inside his store.

I tell you it was a time of hostilities. You don't know how a fighter runs between shots all day long. Isam would shoot off like an arrow just in order to snatch a torn head of lettuce or a bunch of onions or maybe even some apples from between the wheels of a truck which was about to move. My role was to hold off the friends-the rest of the children. If they tried to get hold of an orange, I would see it in the mud before them. We worked all afternoon, Isam and I, struggling with the other children, or the shop owners or the truck drivers, sometimes even with the police. The rest of the time I fought with Isam.

Let me tell you what happened. Isam and I were carrying the basket, just as I said, and there was a policeman standing in the middle of the road. The street was wet and we had no shoes. Perhaps it was because I was looking at the policeman's thick heavy shoes, but anyway, suddenly I saw it there under his shoes. It was about six metres away, but I knew, maybe from the color, that it was more than one pound.

In situations like this, we don't stop and think. People talk about instinct. That's fine. I don't know if the colour of paper money has anything to do with instinct, but it does have a connection with that kind of savage force, crime, the power to strangle someone in a moment, which is there deep inside every one of us. What I do know is that a man, in a time of hostilities, doesn't think when he sees a paper bill under a policeman's shoe, even if he's six metres away and carrying a basket of rotten vegetables. And that's what I did. I threw away what was left of the apple and dropped the basket.

I didn't know exactly what I was going to do. But all the next week I managed to hold the other children off with a thousand lies, which, of course, they knew were lies, but they never said anything about it. There was no virtue here. You know. It was a different question and revolved around only one kind of virtue: five pounds.

How can you possibly understand that? I had the five pounds, but something kept me from using them. As long as they were in my pocket they seemed to me like a key which I held in the palm of my hand and which I could use at any time to open the door and walk out. But whenever I got close to the lock I smelled still another time of hostilities behind the door further away, like going back once more to the beginning.

What followed is not important. I went one day with Isam to the market. While I was trying to grab a bunch of chard which was in front of the wheels of a truck, the truck slowly started to move. At the last minute I slipped and fell underneath it. It was really lucky that the wheels didn't go over my legs, but stopped just as they hit them. In any case, I regained consciousness in the hospital. The first thing I did—as you must have guessed—was to look for the five pounds. But it wasn't there.

I think it was Isam who took them when he was with me in the car on the way to the hospital. But he didn't say and I didn't ask. We just looked at each other and understood. I wasn't angry because it had been fun and I had shed my blood to take the five pounds. I was only sad that I had lost them.

You won't understand. It was in a time of hostilities.

Halide Edib Adivar: Turkish Nationalist

(*Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*, Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan, eds., Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1977, pp. 167-193. Permission pending.)

Halide Edib Adivar [1883-1964] was born in Istanbul into a well-to-do, traditional Turkish family. She grew up in the old aristocratic society of the Ottoman Empire. Her father, Edib Bey, was secretary to Sultan Abdul Hamid and worked in the palace; her mother, whose ancestors were learned religious men, died when Halide was very small. Educated at home by English governesses and Turkish religious shaykhs, Halide then went to the American College for Girls. Halide married her tutor (although he was her father's age) and both she and her husband wrote for the liberal newspaper Tanine, with Halide specializing in literary criticism and articles about women's emancipation...she continued to write (after her divorce), often on the topic of the education of women and their participation in national life.

Most modern Turkish historians list Halide Edib with the "most prominent intellectuals of the time," who were responsible for organizing the nationalist movement. In 1912, she was elected the only woman member of the Turkish nationalist club with branches all over the countryside... During the First World War, she worked in Syria and Lebanon...she was one of the principal writers and translators attached to Mustapha Kemal Pasha's nationalist forces. Her stirring public speeches in the opening months of the nationalist struggle helped make her one of the first Turkish women to become a public figure and national hero. The excerpts which follow describe her early womanhood.

[After the war, the movement for Turkish independence began in earnest. Halide found herself speaking to larger and larger groups.]

These months were months of almost continuous public speaking for me. But the meeting of the revolution was to be in Sultan Ahmed, (a mosque) the Friday after. And whenever people speak in Turkey about the Meeting they mean the one at Sultan Ahmed on June 6, 1919.

I entered the Hippodrome. I cannot tell you how many people accompanied me. I could hardly stand on my feet, so fast and loud was my heart thumping: it was only when I entered the huge square that this violent thumping was stopped by the mere surprise of the spectacle. The minarets of the mosque rose into the brilliant white flutes of magic design. From their tiny balconies high in the air the black draperies waved softly...Down below, just in front of the mosque railings, rose the tribune, covered with an enormous black flag on which was inscribed in huge white letters, "Wilson's Twelfth Point." Not only the square but the thoroughfares down to St. Sofia and Divan Yolou were blocked with a human mass such as Istanbul had never seen and will probably never see again. "Two hundred thousand," said the staff officers.

...As I set foot on the tribune I knew that one of the rare moments of my life had come to me. I was galvanized in every atom of my being by a force which at any other time would have killed me, but which at that crisis gave me the power to experience—to know—the quintessence of the suffering and desire of those two hundred thousand souls.

I believe that the Halide of Sultan Ahmed is not the ordinary, everyday Halide...That particular Halide was very much alive, palpitating with the message of Turkish hearts, a message which prophesized the great tragedy of the coming years...As Halide [listened to the voices of the crowd] she was repeating to herself something like this:

"Islam, which means peace and the brotherhood of men, is eternal. Not the Islam entangled by superstition and narrowness, but the Islam which came as a great spiritual message. I must hold up its supreme meaning today. Turkey, my wronged and martyred nation, is also lasting: she does not only share the sins and faults and virtues of other peoples, she also has her own spiritual and moral force which no material agency can destroy. I must also interpret what is best and most vital in her, that which will connect her with what is best in the universal brotherhood of men."

Halide's voice could not be heard beyond a certain area, I am sure...She said,

> *"The aggressive policy of the allied powers of Europe has been applied during the last generation to the land of Turkey always unjustly, sometimes even treacherously. The European powers would have found a way to send armies of conquest to the stars and the moon had they known that Moslems and Turks inhabited those heavenly bodies.*
>
> *At last they have found a pretext, an opportunity to break to pieces the last empire ruled by the crescent. And against this decision we have no European power to whom we may appeal. But surely even those who have no share in Turkish booty are just as responsible—more responsible—in the inhumanity of this decision. They were all sitting in the court whose object was the defense of human and national rights, yet all that court did was to sanctify the spoliation of the defeated peoples. And these men who call the Turks sinners have sinned themselves so deeply that the great waves of the immaculate oceans cannot cleanse them.*
>
> *But the day will come when a greater court of justice will try those who have deprived the nations of their natural rights. That court will be composed of the very same nations whose governments are now*

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against us. These people will condemn their own governments then for having been unjust to other nations in their name, for there is an eternal sense of what is right in the heart of every individual, and nations are made up of individuals.

Brethren and sons, listen to me. You have two friends: the Moslems and those civilized peoples who will sooner or later raise their voices for your rights. The former are already with you, and the latter we will win over by the invincible justice of our cause.

Governments are our enemies, peoples are our friends, and the just revolt of our hearts our strength.

The day is not far off when all nations will get their rights. When that day comes, take your banners and come and visit the graves of your brethren who have fought and have fallen for the glorious end..."

Arab Nationalism: An Anthology

(selections from *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, Sylvia G. Haim, ed., Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1962, pp. 172-187; 229-231; 233-4. Permission pending.)

1. Islam and Arab Nationalism

(by Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, 1952)

The Arab nationalism in which we believe, and for which we call, is based, as our national pact stipulates, not on racial appeal but on linguistic, historical, cultural and spiritual ties, and on fundamental vital interests. In this respect there is no contradiction between Arab nationalism and Islam...the fact that most of the Arabs remained under the Ottoman government for many centuries has helped very much to spread the mistaken view that Arab nationalism and Islam are in contradiction...

Nationalism is a political and social idea which aims, in the first place, to unify each group of mankind and to make it obey one political order...But we can assert that modern nationalism is based on language, history, literature, customs and qualities. On the whole, the ties that bind individuals together and make them into a nation are both intellectual and material...we find great similarity, and sometimes complete agreement, between what Arab nationalism teaches and what is affirmed by Islam. Language, then, is the primary tenet of our national creed; it is the soul of our Arab nation and the primary aspect of its life. The nation that loses its language is destined to disappear and perish.

...As for Arabic literature which is the result of Arab feeling and emotion all through the ages, its greatest and most venerable parts came from Islam, and indeed, the Koran...is the most awesome example of the elevated prose which the Arab exalts...

First. We must free ourselves from the intellectual power of the West and its imported concepts, and we must think independently and originally about our problems, affairs and history.

Second. We must work earnestly and sincerely to present anew our nation's past and to write our history in a correct scientific manner, in order to eradicate these distorted pictures...and to tear out the black pages of those who speak against us. We must clear our history of false accusations and from the stupidity of the ignorant ones...

Third. We must look to Islam, which we cherish so much and which we believe to be the reflection of the Arab soul and its spiritual source which does not exhaust itself.

2. The Philosophy of the Revolution (by Gamal Abdel Nasser)

The Three Circles: ...As I often sit in my study and think quietly of this subject I ask myself, "What is our positive role in this throubled world and where is the scene in which we can play that role?"

We cannot look stupidly at the map of the world, not realizing our place therein and the role determined to us by that place. Neither can we ignore that there is an Arab circle surrounding us and that this circle is as much a part of us as we are a part of it, and that history has been mixed with it and that its interests are linked to ours.

Can we ignore that there is a continent of Africa in which fate has placed us and which is destined today to witness a terrible struggle on its future? This struggle will affect us whether we want or not.

Can we ignore that there is a Muslim world with which we are tied by bonds which are not only forged by religious faith but also tightened by the facts of history?

There is no doubt that the Arab circle is the most important and the most closely connected with us.

The third circle now remains, the circle that goes beyond the continents and oceans and to which I referred as the circle of our brethren in faith who turn with us toward Mecca.

My faith in the positive efficacy of further strengthening the Islamic bonds with all other Muslims...my mind [travels] to the 80 million Muslims in Indonesia, the 50 million in China, and the several other millions in Malaya, Thailand, Burma and the 100 million in Pakistan, the 100 million or more in the Middle East, and the 40 million in Russia as well as the other millions in the distant parts of the world...I visualize these millions united in one faith...

3. Constitution of the Party of the Arab Ba'th (Iraqi, 1951)

Fundamental Principles

First Principle: Unity and Freedom of the Arab Nations

- The Arab fatherland constitutes an indivisible political and economic unity.
- The Arab nation constitutes a cultural unity.
- The Arab fatherland belongs to the Arabs.

Second Principle: Personality of the Arab Nation

- Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of belief are sacred. No authority can diminish them.
- The value of the citizens is measured by the action they take to further the progress and prosperity of the Arab nation...

Third Principle: The Mission of the Arab Nation

- Colonialism and all that goes with it is a criminal enterprise. The Arabs must fight with all possible means, just as they must take it on themselves to help...all peoples fighting for their freedom.
- Humanity constitutes a whole, the interests of which are common to all.

An Issue of Identity
Gender

Doing Daily Battle
Interviews with Moroccan Women

(Fatima Mernissi, *Doing Daily Battle: Interviews with Moroccan Women*, Mary Jo Lakeland, trans., New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984, pp. 68, 73, 79-81, 86, 88, 91-2, 95-102, 105-6, 108, 124-5. Reprinted by permission.)

I. Zubaida Zannati and her daughter Nazha

Zubaida Zannati, born in al-Jadida into a simple provincial family in which the women used to weave carpets, had "a great ambition to study." This ambition was temporarily stilled when Zubaida was forced into an early marriage. But her frustration was only temporary because she was going to realize through her daughters her dream of further education and of the opening up of horizons other than weaving and knitting. Nazha, her daughter, would become a lawyer.

Q: *Why did you care about your daughters' education?*
A: Because I myself had not been able to continue my education. I had a great ambition to study, to reach a certain level. If it had depended on me, I would not have left school at eleven years old; I would have continued my studies in order to be somebody later on; I would have managed to get along better. But my parents were opposed to that. When my eldest daughter got her primary school certificate, my brother went to Rabat, where he knew someone who could get a scholarship for her. He registered her at the girls' secondary school in Rabat. Then when her sister obtained her primary school certificate, she was also admitted to the same secondary school with a scholarship, and they were boarders.

Q: *So, in your opinion, should your daughters choose their own husbands or not?*
A: Oh, yes! I believe that it's up to them to choose their husbands because I know what happens when a woman marries a man she has not chosen. If one of them wants to marry someone, I would not oppose it. That is what happened with the oldest one when she got acquainted with someone. She told me that someone was going to come to ask for her hand: I told her that that concerned no one but herself.

II. Dawiya al-Filaliya and daughters Latifa and Malika

Dawiya al-Filaliya, born in 1913 in the Ksar es Souk region, was married at nine years old, according to the traditions of the area. She had her first child with her first period. But in the Morocco of the 1920s, the young girls of southern

Morocco underwent some extraordinary experiences which neither tradition nor men had ever spoken to them about. Dawiya migrated, under the guidance of her mother, to the north. Her infant daughter under her arm, she went to work as an agricultural labourer in the market gardens around Sale. Later she tried to find work as a cleaning woman to be closer to her daughters, who were apprenticed to a mu'allima to learn carpet-making. She finished her work career in a spinning mill in Sale, while her daughters made their way to the carpet factories and workshops in the capital, and finally to their own workshops at home.

Q: *Where were you born?*
A: In the Ksar es Souk region. My father was a peasant. We had our own land. We had olive trees, date palms; we harvested the crops, we didn't lack anything. We had sheep and cows, and our house was very nice. I had five brothers and sisters. I was the oldest. The ones born before me all died. My mother milked the cows and also did the housework. My mother should have received the insurance money for my father's car accident. But the government didn't give it all to her. She got 10,000 francs. For the *'Id* (religious holiday) we bought a sheep, like everybody. My mother went to see the *qadi*. She told him: "I have some fatherless children. I want to go back to the country and buy a piece of land or a house." "I would very much like to give you what is due you," the qadi replied, "but I want to be certain that your brothers don't take it all away from you." "My brothers are all for me. I want to be with them. I want to give the power of attorney to them", she replied. Finally they settled the question of the power of attorney. A *wakil* was appointed. Every Friday they went with him to the auctions where houses were sold. He accompanied us to look at one. When we arrived at the house, he asked my mother to knock on the door. When it was opened, he asked the people to let my mother visit her future house. The proprietor had just repainted the whole house because he was expecting to celebrate a wedding there. As they went out, the wakil turned to my mother and asked: "Well, daughter of Mulay Ali Sharif, do you like the house?" My mother told him to decide: "I am not from here; I don't know what to buy or to sell. I will be fine where you decide to install me." "You will be fine here", he said. "You and your children. And moreover, it is a neighbourhood where there are only people of good family. You have nothing to fear." They bought the house, and we no longer had to pay rent. What we were paid at the end of the day could be used to live on.

Q: *How did you begin to work in a factory?*
A: There was a *sharif* who came to see us. It was the day of the feast of the Prophet's birthday, and we chatted with each other. At that time, my two daughters, Latifa and Malika, were already working in the factory.

Q: *At what age did they begin working?*
A: At six or seven they were working with Mu'allima Fatna. She didn't pay them. The important thing for me was that they learn a trade. I took responsibility for providing for their food and clothing. With the aid of another woman, I worked at preparing semolina for couscous. The boss gave us a quintal of farina and we worked the whole night.

Q: *Where did you prepare the semolina? At your house?*
A: No, at the house of the factory boss. We spent the night preparing semolina. We steam-cooked it, put it out to dry, and in the morning the boss took it to sell in the stores. I worked at this to earn the money for my daughters' clothes, and their father took care of the rest.

Q: *Did you begin to work during the life of your second husband?*
A: When I began to work at preparing the semolina, he said to me, "As long as it is a house where you are working and not outside, that's all right." We were a team of four women: two for preparing the semolina: and two for cooking it. So I continued to work with these women until the sharif whom I spoke about came to visit us on the day of the feast of the Prophet's birthday. We talked a while, and he asked me where I was working. I answered that I had been doing house-cleaning in people's houses up until now and that I hadn't found better work. Then he asked me if I would like to work in the spinning mill. I told him yes. He said he would go and try to find work for me. Three days later he came back with a job for me. I went to the factory where I found a Frenchman; he told me to come back the next day. At eight o'clock the next morning, I reported to the foreman and he assigned me to the washing tubs: "Just watch how the other women do it and do the same." They gave me an apron and I set to work. I stayed there until the day they told me I should move onto the machines. So then I learned to work at the machines.

III. **Latifa and Malika**

While Latifa, born in 1952, and Malika, born in 1954, were asking in astonishment why they had not had the right to the schooling, the training, and the advancement that the nationalists and officials of independent Morocco had emphasized, in Rabat people were drawing up, as the plan for the future, a return to authenticity, to tradition—a tradition which, apparently, no longer existed except in the fantasies of the planners.

Q: *Let's start at the time that you went to the mu'allima (carpet factory).*
A: I was eleven years old and my sister Malika nine.

Q: *What did you do before that?*
A: I went to the *msid* and my sister to the school. I didn't do well, so my mother took me out of school.

Q: *To learn what?*
A: Carpet-making. She put us there so we would learn. It is

there that we grew up; we stayed there almost seven years.

Q: *Did the mu'allima pay you or did you have to pay to learn?*
A: She didn't pay us for four years. After that, she began to pay us. The first four years were for learning. In fact, we learned very quickly. We didn't take a long time to learn. She wanted to profit from us. It was only afterwards that she began to pay us. She gave us thirty-five dirhams every two weeks.

Q: *How many people work on a loom?*
A: There can be six or even seven, or only four. It depends on the size of the loom. So we went to see my cousins to look for work. They spoke to their employer. He told us to come, but, as he didn't have a place open for us, we had to work with our cousins on the carpet that they were in the process of making. So we stayed with them.

Q: *How many of you worked on the same carpet?*
A: There were four of them, and with my sister and me that made six. When I began to work with this new boss, he advanced me a little money and I had to borrow the rest. I had to wait until I finished my first carpet and was paid for it before I was able to buy the loom.

Q: *How much did it cost you?*
A: Around 100 dirhams. I don't remember exactly; maybe it was 90. At the beginning we had a wooden loom. The one that the new boss installed for us is much better; it is metal. The wooden one broke down all the time. Sometimes I was able to repair it and I did it; but other times I wasn't able to, and the work was brought to a standstill for a whole day.

Q: *Describe how a normal workday goes.*
A: My married sister brings her daughter to us very early, around seven. We are barely up at that time. I get washed and then check little Lubna to see if her mother has changed her nappy; if not, I do it. I give her breakfast before I have mine. My sister tidies up the room where we have slept, and then one of us goes to the kitchen to wash the nappies. I take the basket and do the shopping; then return to prepare breakfast. We get to work when the housework is finished.

Postscript: What became of Latifa and Malika?

In 1978 Malika married an employee of the Coca Cola Company in Oujda. She has two children: a boy and a girl. She has given up working since she got married. She has learned to embroider caftans with pearls in the Oriental style. She only works for herself and her family. It's a pastime, a means of self-expression, rather than a source of income.

Latifa married in 1980. Her husband is a fireman in the Civil Defense Force. She has a daughter, and she does dressmaking and embroidery at home. Her husband bought her an electric sewing machine with his savings. Presently she lives with her mother Dawiya because of the very high rents.

Portraits of Turkish Women

(Excerpts from *Spotlight on Turkey: Tradition and Change*, New York, NY: The American Forum for Global Education, 1992, pp.103-105.)

I. Tülay Bayram - Master Weaver

Age: 22 years old
Education: Elementary school - not completed
Employment: Elazig Hali Sanayi Okulu (Rug Industry School)

Tülay is the head loom master, supervising more than 60 girls and young women. She is the only worker who has health insurance benefits and she earns about $200 a month. Tülay works six days a week from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M. with a half-day on Saturday. She is fortunate to have one month paid vacation and sick days. She has worked on the loom for seventeen years; she attended the carpet school with her mother when she was only five years old. Her father died 13 years ago; Tülay has six sisters.

Coming from a low-income family, weaving on the loom is one of the opportunities for women to help their family. Tülay teaches the younger girls the mechanics of weaving and the designs. Tülay reproduces the designs on grids for the girls to copy one square at a time. Every loom has one leader who shows the one or two younger girls the design and how to properly weave it. Tülay supervises everyone going from loom to loom to be sure the weaving is correct. The girls are recruited from poor neighborhoods, they bring their relatives and friends into the school. The city government of Elazig sponsors the school; some city governments have a rug weaving school. Usually the city government advertises in low-income neighborhoods to attract working-class parents. The girls, from seven to fifteen years old, almost exclusively come to the carpet school for economical reasons. Usually the girls work until they marry, some local men don't want their wives working after marriage.

Tülay plans to continue weaving even if she marries. Tülay is an essential part of the school and even if she quits, they will beg her to return.

II. Melahat Demir - Imam's Wife/housewife

Age: 27 years old
Married: 10 years - arranged marriage. Two children: One boy and one girl
School: Elementary School - Later attended Koranic school

Although she is a religious woman, Melahat dresses like millions of other Turkish women in modern day clothing. In the villages *shalvars* are common. Shalvar are very baggy pants of printed cotton. Melahat covers her head with a scarf; usually scarves are worn by more traditional women not necessarily more religious. The use of the scarf is more common in villages where a bride living in her father-in-law's home should have her head covered in front of all male members of the family and guests. Melahat believes that the importance of practicing her religion is in the heart not in the formality of the dress. She prefers normal attire and believes some women who wear the extreme covering of themselves are showing off and that they think they are holier than others. According to Melahat, Islam doesn't require entirely covering the body but just part of the face.

Melahat strongly believes Muslim women are much better off in Turkey than other Muslim countries in the world. She stated that Islam gives equal rights and human rights to everyone, women are held in high esteem as head of the household and taking care of the children; however, some countries interpret the Koran for the interest of the ruling elite and they have a tendency to see the women as second class human beings. Both husband and wife believe that children are born without religious and racist prejudices. They also believe that people who believe in different religions and who speak different languages are all equal and they should be treated equally. Moreover, Melahat and her husband feel that they are not better than Christians or Jews because all worship God. Whatever her children want to become, a doctor, a lawyer or a hoja, it is primarily important that they help society. The Imam (the *Imam* is a Moslem religious leader, equivalent to a Minister in Christian faith), husband of Melahat, who is well-educated in the sciences and theology with knowledge of English and Arabic, in addition to his native Turkish agrees with his wife that both his son and daughter should be well-educated.

III. Dr. Muazzez Cig - Museum Curator; Specialist on ancient Cuneiform;

Age: 78 years old
Skills: Fluent in English and German; author of 10 books, Numerous poems, internationally published articles on the Sumerian Civilization

Born in 1914, in the historic city of Bursa, Muazzez was given the middle name Ilmiye derived from *ilim*, science), by her father, Zekeriya, who had wished her to be a scientist. Though a graduate of the conservative *Medrese* (Islamic University), Zekeriya was a teacher devoted to the progressive ideals of Atatürk. His wish to afford his daughter a diversified education was seconded by his wife, a self-educated, no-nonsense woman.

Drawn to the study of humanities as well as theology and social sciences, Muazzez came of age in a liberal atmosphere, on equal footing with her two brothers. After graduating from the Bursa Teachers College in 1931, with an idealistic spirit reminiscent of Resat Nuri Güntekin's immortal heroine in his classic novel *Calikushu* (*The Thornbird*), she taught for five years in the remotest corners of Anatolia. Then her unquenchable thirst for knowledge returned her to Ankara University. For six years, she studied Hittitology, Sumerology, Archaeology and German.

In 1940, marrying fellow faculty student Kemal Cig, she embarked upon her 32-year career with the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. Kemal took a post with the Topkapi Museum and rose to be one of its most respected directors. For many years the couple lived in an apartment adjoining the former Harem quarters. They raised two daughters, who graduated from college. Their respective professions are medicine and interior design.

Muazzez was frequently hostess to distinguished guests, from England's Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Anne, to Melina Mercouri and Peter Ustinov. Meanwhile, she found her true calling: the deciphering and cataloging of 75,000 cuneiform (wedge-shaped characters) tablets, the baked clay echoes of the long forgotten tongues spoken by the Hittites, Sumerians and Akkadians. These remarkable tablets had been unearthed in Mesopotamia and during two major archaeological excavations in Turkey. Ranging from postage stamp size to 18 inches in diameter, they cover law, economy, literature, marriage, real estate contracts, magic, cures for disease, as well as passionate love, and were composed over a period of 2,500 years. Muazzez is quick to point out that the first peace treaty was also recorded in Cuneiform, in 1269 B.C. Its enlarged brass copy hangs in the United Nations building in New York City, a gift from the Turkish Government.

Convinced through her studies that the Turks and Sumerians share a common root, she attended symposiams in Belgium, Japan, and the U.S. She also completed the Neo-Sumerian dictionary sponsored by the Universities of Torino and Heidelberg. After her beloved husband's death, she continued carrying the torch of their chosen duty, the guardianship and promotion of Turkish history.

Today, because she is still thriving on the challenges of her profession, Muazzez is approaching the coveted title "octogenarian" with the cheerful nimble-footedness of a twenty-year old. An ardent follower of the socio/political trends in Turkey and the U.S., she is distressed by the setbacks the women's equal rights movement has been dealt within both countries. She believes today's youth is over-indulged; parents have to balance love and toughness while teaching the right values to a child. To prove her point, she quotes from a cuneiform tablet written from a father to his son, "Other children study hard even though their fathers make them work in the fields and serve them hand and foot. But I am not forcing you to do these things—and that's why you're so lazy." With a smile, she concludes, "When I first read that quote, I thought of many a distressed parent I've known, and said to myself, "Study the past and you'll know the future! For it is true that the more things change, the more they remain the same..."

Bedouin Women

I. Bedouin Blues

(Lila Abu-Lughod, "Natural History", Vol.96, No.7, July 1987, New York, NY: American Museum of Natural History, pp.24-32. © The American Museum of Natural History, 1987. Reprinted by permission.)

Poignant lyric poems punctuate the intimate conversations of the Awlad 'Ali with whom I lived for several periods in the late 1970s and mid-1980s. The Awlad 'Ali are former sheepherders along the Egyptian coast from west of Alexandria to the Libyan border

I had not come to Egypt to study poetry. When I arrived in the fall of 1978, I was interested in examining the patterns and meanings of interpersonal relationships, especially those between men and women, in a Bedouin society... Hardly anyone had paid attention to the intimate world of personal and family life or to the world of women. This was the realm I wanted to explore.

I ended up living in a small community of recently settled Bedouins belonging to the tribes known as the Awlad 'Ali (sons of 'Ali), whose traditional territory extends along a coastal desert strip from Alexandria to Libya. Although many Awlad 'Ali have become sedentary since the nineteenth century, until thirty-five years ago those who remained nomadic made a living in the Western Desert by herding sheep and planting barley. Before the railroads were built, the Awlad 'Ali also organized camel caravans to transport dates from the major desert oases to the Nile Valley. Now they are involved in all sorts of activities, from the old one of raising sheep to the newer ones of tending groves of olive and fig trees and speculating in real estate. Many profit from smuggling and other, more legal entrepreneurial activities. The Awlad 'Ali used to live in tents. Now, although most live in houses, they still pitch tents next to their houses and prefer sitting in them because they are peaceful and nonconfining. They used to ride on horses, camels, and donkeys; now they prefer Toyota trucks.

As an anthropology graduate student bravely setting off to do research, I was greatly embarrassed when my father insisted on coming with me from the United States to introduce me. It took me a long time to fully grasp his reasons. Because he was of Arab background, although not a Bedouin, he was aware that in this culture a young, unaccompanied woman traveling on uncertain business would be an exception. I, of course, knew of the negative image of Western women, an image fed by rumors, films, and the frequent insensitivity of Western women to local standards of morality and acceptable social behavior. But I had assumed I would be able to overcome people's suspicions, first by playing up the Arab half of my identity and not identifying with Westerners, and second by behaving properly.

What I had not considered was that respectability was reckoned not just in terms of one's actions but also in terms of one's relationship to the larger social world. I had failed to anticipate that the Bedouins, for whom belonging to a tribe and family is most important, would assume that a woman alone must have so alienated her family that they no longer cared about her. Worse yet, perhaps she had done something so immoral that they had ostracized her. An unmarried girl valued by her family would never be permitted to travel alone, unprotected and at the mercy of anyone who wished to take advantage of her. By accompanying me on my first visit to these families, my father laid to rest any suspicions about my respectability. They could see I was from a good family that cared about me. This helped them perceive me as an Arab and a Muslim, despite my poor Arabic, my American mother, and my unfamiliarity with their ways, and enabled them to accept me more easily as a daughter.

By putting me under the protection of a particular family, my father had assured my safety. But the flip side of protection is restriction, and I found that my daughterly role had some drawbacks. For the first few months I rebelled against some of the subtle ways people restricted my activities. I was expected to live in the women's social world and could only go to households where the women in my family went. More important, I was expected to live in their moral community. This put tremendous pressure on me to learn the appropriate behavior for young women, especially concerning modesty.

At first I thought I should move back and forth between the women's world and the men's, but then I realized that in order to be trusted in either I had to declare my loyalties firmly. By accepting the women's world, which was more lively, relaxed, and intimate, I finally began to reap the unanticipated benefits of my status as an adopted daughter. I began to enjoy the personal pleasures of close companionship and a sense of belonging...Because I participated in their everyday lives and could not force them to answer questions or talk about what did not interest them, I could learn how these Bedouins viewed their lives.

My first clue that poetry might be a rich source of information on the relationships I wished to study came one day when a shepherd's wife, helping out by baking bread in our makeshift oven, suddenly recited a poem after a minor disappointment.

My host's reaction suggested to me that people took poetry seriously as a very personal communication of feelings. From my host's wife I gathered that the poems were somewhat confidential. She scolded me for my indiscretion in sharing this poem with her husband and warned me never to show women's poems to men.

Everyone seemed keenly interested in and moved by this type of personal poetry. Like Japanese haiku in their brevity and brief imagery, poems like the following were reminiscent of the American blues in emotional tone.

I wonder, is despair
a passing shadow or my companion
for life

What was puzzling was that the sentiments expressed in the poems bore little relationship to the sentiments of ordinary life. First, it failed to note that the poems through which Bedouins expressed what I thought of as their "true" feelings were highly stylized and conventional...I had to consider what these reactions meant to the Bedouins themselves, which required understanding the place of romantic love in their society.

Americans expect romantic love to preoccupy young people, to be the basis for choosing a mate, and to remain the ideal of all adults in their intimate relationships. The Awlad 'Ali Bedouins view things quite differently. They are scandalized by what they perceive as the gross immorality of Europeans. They even feel superior to their Egyptian peasant and urban neighbors whose laxness in matters of sexual segregation and emphasis on the closeness of married couples they find improper and embarrassing...For the Bedouins, the deepest kind of love is expected to be between family members—siblings and parents and children.

This attitude toward love and sexuality is at the core of the Bedouin moral code of honor. Sexual modesty or propriety is essential to personal honor and respectability in this community. The honorable woman or man maintains distance from members of the opposite sex except close relatives and denies interest in love or sexual matters. The sentiment associated with or thought to motivate this avoidance is *hasham*, which can be translated as modesty, embarrassment, or shame.

Modesty, for the Bedouins, refers to what we might think of as an internal state of shyness and embarrassment and to a set of behaviors, associated with these feelings, that conform to what could be called a code of modesty. The cultural repertoire of such behaviors includes not only sexual propriety but also requires modest demeanor and dress (covering the hair, the arms to the wrists, and the legs to the ankles) for both sexes. The modest person looks down, sits or stands formally and does not eat, smoke, talk, laugh, or joke in certain types of social situations. For married women, veiling in front of certain categories of men, such as older relatives and in-laws, is also a mark of modesty. To act modestly is a matter of pride because it is considered a sign of respect for the social and moral system.

But why could they express the other side of their feelings in poetry? And why don't they ruin their reputations when they reveal these "immodest" sentiments in their poems? The answers are complex, but here are just a few suggestions. First, I think people are protected by the veiled and impersonal form of the poetry and the groups in which they recite it (they only recite poems in front of people they are close to). Second, by confining these feelings to the rigid form of poetry, Bedouins demonstrate a kind of mastery, and any kind of mastery is admirable. Third, it may be that people make their everyday conformity to the moral code more impressive by showing what powerful feelings they must master in order to live up to its ideals. Finally, reciting poetry seems to be a way of subverting the code of honor and modesty. By rebelling, in this limited way, against the demands of the system, individuals may actually enhance their honor because defiance is the ultimate expression of personal freedom. And as we saw earlier, personal independence is a linchpin of honor.

In the living rooms of their new houses, the men hang photographs of sheep and camel herds and lovingly burnish their old shotguns, now used only to hunt the occasional wild bird. Women, on the other hand, are not romantically nostalgic about the old days. They remember the hardships of herding, carrying water, chopping firewood, milking sheep, weaving, and pitching tents. What they do retain from the past is their passion for poetry. Yet with the arrival of commercial cassettes of the Bedouin blues, even this is changing. Women listen to and appreciate the tapes but do not make them. Poetry was always cherished as the voice of personal independence and the freedom to resist.

II. Analyzing Resistance: Bedouin Women's Discourses

(Lila Abu-Luqhod, *To Speak or be Silent: The Paradox of Disobedience in the Lives of Women*. Lena B. Ross, ed. Wilmette, IL: ChiRON Publ., 1993. Reprinted by permission.)

This article deals with all sorts of resistance which tell us about forms of power and how people are caught up in them. To illustrate the usefulness of this idea, I will be discussing some forms of resistance I found among the women of the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin. The first arena of resistance is the sexually segregated women's world where women daily enact all sorts of minor defiance of the restrictions enforced by elder men in the community.

Women use secrets and silences to their advantage. They often conspire to hide knowledge from the men; they cover for each other in minor matters, like secret trips to healers or visits to their friends and relatives; they smoke in secret and quickly put out their cigarettes when children come running to warn them that men are approaching. These forms of resistance indicate that one way power is exercised in relation to women is through a range of prohibitions and restrictions, which they both *embrace* in their support for a system of sexual segregation and *resist* as suggested by the fact that they fiercely protect their separate world, that arena where the defiance take place.

A second and widespread form of resistance is Bedouin girls' and women's resistance to marriage. Indeed, one of the major powers that families, and especially elder male relatives like fathers and paternal uncles, wield is control over the arrangement of marriages. Despite their apparent power, actual marriage arrangements are always complicated and involve many people, especially mothers and female relatives. Mothers sometimes successfully block marriages their daughters do not want, even though fathers or other male guardians are supposed to have control.

The most interesting cases are those where women themselves actually resist marriages that have been arranged for them. Their retrospective narratives of resistance were among the most popular storytelling events I heard. The following one was told to me and a group of her daughters-in-law by the old matriarch of the community in which I lived. The events must have taken place at least sixty years ago. She began by explaining that the first person to whom she was to have been married was a first cousin. His relatives had come to her household and conducted the negotiations and had even gone so far as to slaughter some sheep, the practice that seals the marriage agreement. She went on:

> *He was a first cousin, and I didn't want him. He was an old man and we were living near each other, eating out of one bowl [sharing meals or living in one household]. They came and slaughtered a sheep and I started screaming. I started crying. And my father had bought a new gun, a cartridge gun. He said, "If you don't shut up, I'll send you flying with this gun."*
>
> *Well, there was a ravine and I went over and sat there all day. I sat next to it, saying, "possess me, spirits, possess me." I wanted the spirits to possess me; I wanted to go crazy. Half the night would pass and I'd be sitting there. I'd be sitting there, until Braika [a relative] came. And she'd cry with me and then drag me home by force and I'd go sleep in her tent. After twelve days, my cousin's female relatives were dying the black strip for the top of the tent. They were about to finish sewing the tent I'd live in. And they had brought my trousseau. I said, "I'll go get the dye for you." I went and found they had ground the black powder, and it was soaking in the pot, the last of the dye, and I flipped it over—Pow!—on my face, on my hair, on my hands until I was completely black.*
>
> *My father came back and said, "What's happened here? What's the matter with this girl? Hey, you, what's the matter?" The women explained. He went and got a pot of water and a piece of soap and said, "If you don't wash your hands and face I'll . . ." So I wash my hands, but only the palms, and I wiped my face, but I only get a little off from here and there. And I'm crying the whole time. All I did was cry. Then they went and put some supper in front of me. He said, "Come here and eat dinner." I'd eat and my tears were salting each mouthful. I had spent twelve days, and nothing had entered my mouth.*
>
> *The next afternoon my brother came by and said to me, "I'm hungry, can you make me a snack?" I went to make it for him, some fresh flatbread, and I was hungry. I had taken a loaf and I put a bit of honey and a bit of winter oil in a bowl. I wanted to eat, I who hadn't eaten a thing in twelve days. But then he said, "What do you think of this? On Friday they're doing the wedding and today is Thursday and there aren't even two days between now and then." I found that the loaf I was going to eat I'd dropped. He asked, "Well, do you want to go to so-and-so's or do you want to go to your mother's brother's?" There was an eclipse; the sun went out and nothing was showing. I said, "I'll go to my maternal uncle's." I put my shawl on my head and started running. I ran on foot until I got to my uncle's. I was in bad shape, a mess. So I went home. After that I didn't hear another word. The trousseau just sat there in the chest, and the tent, they sewed it and got it all ready and then put it away in their tent. And autumn came and we migrated west, and we came back again. When we came back, they said, "We want to have the wedding." I began screaming. They stopped. No one spoke about it again.*

This old woman's narrative, which included two more episodes of resisted marriages before she agreed to one, follows the pattern of many I heard - of women who had resisted the decisions of their fathers, uncles, or older brothers and eventually won. Her story, like theirs, let others know that resistance to marriage was possible.

Folktales, songs, and jokes are not the only subversive discourses among women in Bedouin society, although they indicate the significance of the ideology of sexual difference itself as a form of power. In my book (Abu-Lughod, 1986) I analyzed what I consider to be the most important of the subversive discourses of resistance in Bedouin society—a kind of oral lyric poetry. These poem/songs, known as *ghinnawas* (little songs), are recited mostly by women and young men, usually in the midst of ordinary conversations between intimates. What is most striking about them is that people express through them sentiments that differ radically from those they express in their ordinary-language conversations, sentiments of vulnerability and love. Many of these songs concern relationships with members of the opposite sex toward whom they respond, outside of poetry, with anger or denial of concern.

The everyday forms of Bedouin women's resistance described above pose a number of analytical dilemmas. First, how might we develop theories that give these women credit for resisting in a variety of creative ways the power of those who control so much of their lives... Second, how might we account for the fact that Bedouin women both resist and support the existing system of power (they support it through practices like veiling, for example)...Third, how might we acknowledge that their forms of resistance, such as folktales and poetry...must somehow be safety valves...

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Watching the World from Sarah's Loom

(Erika Friedal, *Lives in an Iranian Village: Women of Deh Koh*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989, pp.161-66, 168-70, 172-3. Reprinted by permission.)

There are a handful of traditional weavers in the village. They have more business than they can handle and make four times as much money as the girls working on government looms. Many more women than these few know how to set up a loom and to weave at least the simple fabrics used for storage and saddlebags.

Sarah's transport bags are firmer, the patterns on her breadcloths more regular, the colors in her backpacks more pleasing than anybody else's in the village. Everybody agrees about this, even patrons of other weavers. Her customers come from far and wide and often will wait patiently for several seasons for her to get around to filling their order. In winter, when most of the other weavers quit altogether, she installs her loom under the protective roof of her porch. She does not like this workplace, though, because despite a fireplace at her back her fingers are stiff with cold, and the light that gets to her from over the low wall is dim and gray. Also, only a few people keep her company in winter. Come spring, the loom is moved out as soon as the rains are over. In the old courtyard, a shade of poplar twigs and rags was fashioned along the morning-sun wall (it would crash down on loom and weaver several times a season, to be redone with fresh boughs) to keep the sun off her head and out of her eyes. But after her son built a row of new rooms behind the old house a year before the revolution, Sarah set up the loom next to it under a huge walnut tree in the neighbor's (her cousin's) vacant lot. This was by far the best place she had ever had: light, airy, and shady most of the hot day, pleasant not only for herself but also for whomever came to sit with her. The walnut tree, Sarah's niece Mahin once said, was a generous and tireless host.

As a rule, very few strangers were among those who traveled her way. It was just as well, she thought, given what she heard about them. "Decent folks among them, I am sure, but odd," she said, when Mahrokh, her pregnant daughter-in-law, and Nargez, her pregnant neighbor with the piercing voice, tried to count the strangers in the village and found no end. Sarah was crouched behind the head beam, placing the warp which her youngest granddaughter, passing back and forth between the two beams, was rolling off a big ball of thin, white wool yarn. The girl was sliding the ball alternately under Sarah's beam and the other one, which was manned by her mother. Warping a loom ideally takes three people: stretching the warp and keeping it tight, at precise intervals, is an exacting task which can't be done well alone or with only one helper. Sarah was testing the warped yarn. "Tighter, Mahrokh," she said, "it is strong yarn, it won't break."

By the next afternoon Sarah had tied alternate warp strings on two heddles and had fastened them onto the two short, slightly convex pieces of wood, dark and polished from long use, resting on the cross-piece of the buttering tripod. Sliding the wooden pieces back and forth over the cross-piece opened the sheds alternately. But the tension on the warp was not right; the left hand had slackened. Mahrokh and Sarah's sister (here to borrow some henna to relieve an aching head by packing it in henna paste) and Banu (returning with her baby from a visit to the doctor) were pulling hard at the beam at the loose side so Sarah could insert a piece of flattish rock between the beam and the post. "Oh, Ali!" Mahrokh cried. But now a few strings on the other side were not tight enough, and a granddaughter, just back from school, had to tear a piece of paper from a notebook, which Sarah folded and slid between the strings and the beam.

She was running her fingers over the warp, muttering to herself, not quite satisfied yet, when Leila stopped by on her way home from school. Two young women had arrived in the village from Isfahan or Tehran or maybe even the holy city of Qum, she reported, to teach Koran and religious studies to girls and women over the summer, without a salary, for the love of God... "There are good people in this world, by Holy Abbas," she said. They were to live in one of the smaller classrooms in the girls' school, alone by themselves, and had brought with them all necessities for setting up house, a kerosene stove for cooking and a teapot and such, but so far no one had been able to take a good look at them. They were totally enveloped in black and nothing at all showed but one eye: Leila demonstrated this, to everybody's amusement. Even she, a practiced veil-wrap user of the new, strict way, failed to keep the wrap in place while moving her head. One of the two women, she said, had glasses, and both wore blue jeans and dusty sneakers—that much one could observe with some luck. They spoke very softly with voices like little girls, like the announcer on the children's program on television, but when a man approached, the janitor or a teacher or even only a boy, a sort of little boy, Leila said, who still thinks his birdie is only to pee, the women would turn completely and stop talking altogether. The granddaughters said that this was all true; they had seen them move through the bazaar, two figures of solid black. They wore gloves, a girl in school's father, a shopkeeper, had told them, so that not even their hands would be visible to men. Sarah was so astounded she forgot the warp.

Mahrokh grinned until her eyes were mere slits above her high, puffy cheeks. "If they looked at me," she said, "they would call me a heathen. White scarf," she enumerated, plucking at it, "hair showing in front, hair showing at the sides" (she wore the twisted sidelocks of married women), and if one wants to one can even see the braids-here, and here."

"And the neck, if you throw your head back like this," said her older daughter. "Don't do this." She was annoyed with her mother for making fun of the new dress code. Even Miss Salimi told her students they had to be true soldiers of Islam and make sure their mothers and grandmothers at home complied with God's orders. But her mother was unteachable. And Grandmother-well, at least she wore the dark clothes of an old woman.

It is no hardship to weave a breadcloth without help, because it is only hands wide and except for the two ends the weave is simple, in white, interrupted only by a few rows of colored lattice and diamond-shaped patterns (called "cow's stomach" and "flower"). By mid-afternoon the next day, having spent the morning in the bath, Sarah had finished the linenweave stripes of red and green and the damaskweave in blue and white, which mark the beginning. She was working on the first row of latticed rectangles (blue, purple, green, and pink) by the time Nargez had hung washed fleece on the hedge to dry and had joined her for a short visit. Keeping somebody company who was working on a lonely job had religious merits. "I talked to the two Koran teachers yesterday as they were walking by," she told Sarah. "They were out for a walk, they said." Sarah and Nargez looked at each other. Sarah shrugged her shoulders and Nargez raised a thin eyebrow quizzically.

Before Sarah was halfway through her breadcloth the school year was over, Koran school had started, and the fasting month was upon them. The two Koran teachers were fasting, of course, despite the special hardships of a summer fast: no food or drink, not so much as a drop of water on your tongue, from before sunrise to after sundown. Sarah's granddaughters fasted, even the youngest one, who was barely ten. When they tried to get their fourteen-year-old brother to fast, he shrugged his shoulders. He had to work, he said. Fasting was for idle women who had nothing to do all day. The girls, however, slept after their heavy early-morning meal until well into the day and then hung around, listless, weak, with parched lips, stinking from the mouth. Mahrokh and Sarah teased and scolded them. The oldest girl said she did not dare to break the fast, because if somebody would tell on her she might get into troubles in school; she wanted to try out for the teacher training college, and not fasting would be seen as moral weakness. But after the second one fainted, Mahrokh refused to wake her daughters any more. She said she would rather be guilty of that sin than of hurting the health of her children. The youngest, who was in summer school with the bespectacled religion teacher, was glad and embarrassed at the same time. Sarah said that if the teacher asked her, she should say that her parents did not wake her up and it was their fault, not hers. But she preferred to lie and to pretend she was still fasting. By then, Miss Salimi had gone home for vacation, and no one knew whether she fasted or not. Probably not though." Mahrokh said.

"The baker has a wife and children in Isfahan," said Sarah's granddaughter. "Bibi told us in school. He is rooming with them. His wife does not want to live in a village, but he is making more money here than in Isfahan. He is hiring Bibi's brother."

"Maybe he is looking for a second wife here?" Mehri suggested. "It is easy now for a man to take another wife." This was met with pointed silence. Sarah's husband was looking for a second wife, and they all knew it. Mehri had been tactless.

The story was a short and familiar one. Sarah's first husband was killed in a battle shortly after her second child, Mahrokh's husband, was born. As was good and reasonable custom then, his brother Jomhur, as yet unmarried and much younger than Sarah, took her as his wife and brought up his own and his brother's children. They had five together, but his two sons died. Lately he had gotten restless. Sarah had always neglected him, he complained, although he had taken good care of her, and now she was treating him even worse. (It was generally understood that this meant she refused to sleep with him.) Sarah said she had had to support him with her income from the loom because he was lazy and only would hang around the house most of the time, and anyway, she was an old woman now. He had locked his radio and his clothes and his bedding into the bigger of their two rooms and announced he did not want her, he would find a better wife. Sarah was upset, and so were all her daughters and her son. They talked to both of their parents, pressing for a reconciliation, but to no avail. By now the family was split between those who were for him taking another wife, and those who were against it, with the pro faction becoming more numerous. His youngest daughter, after seeing him cook his own dinner rice one day (his own choice, said Sarah; he refused to eat with her), was criticizing her mother and scouting for a wife for her father quite openly. However, since no one in the village was willing to give him a wife—out of respect for Sarah, said her supporters—he left to find a bride elsewhere. Rumor had it that Amene's brother, his son-in-law, was trying to find one in the village where he was teaching. Amene, who had been a frequent visitor at Sarah's loom, did not dare go there now.

The old man was off her back sooner than she had figured. She had just put in the last row of colored lattices on the breadcloth and was working on the final repeat of stripes at the end when Amene's husband received word from his brother, Sarah's son-in-law (through a man peddling rugs from that village), that they had found a wife for Jomhur and would bring her shortly. The girl, the stranger volunteered, was a very good girl—a little older, and not at all flighty (this translated as ugly or impaired in some way)—and her people would not ask much bride price for her, they were good people (that meant poor and in no position to be choosy), and she would take good care of him, for sure. Amene passed the word to Mamalus and Effat, who in turn told Banu and Mahin. By the time Mahrokh and Sarah's daughters tactfully broke the news to Sarah she had picked up enough rumors to take it more calmly than other members of the family, who were divided still and arguing hotly.

Amidst a hubbub of coming and going, of discussions, accusations and discontent, the granddaughters helped Sarah carry her belongings past the loom to their house: a bundle of clothes, a few bags, pots and pans-old, well worn (the new bride would bring her own, bought by her father with the money Jomhur had given as a bride price, although Sarah wondered where he had gotten it), her bedding and her new henhouse with the three chickens. She left the gas burner for the new wife because she pitied her, a poor girl from the back of beyond, and did not need it in her son's house. She would eat at his tray and sleep with her granddaughters now, not as a guest but as a permanent member of her son's household.

Sarah was not left alone a minute. People came to pity her, to cheer her up, to curse her husband, to remind her that she was well liked and respected by a large family, she had nothing to be afraid of. Her eldest daughter urged her to come to Mashhad with them—they would leave as soon as the alfalfa hay was in. One granddaughter tried her religion teacher's sermon on the subject: "If a man desires a second wife, and if he can take care of two wives adequately, and if he provides for both equally, and if he treats them equally, and if he divides his time and attention equally between them, and if he does not prefer one above the other, then his first wife commits a sin if she resents it." But the reactions to this were not what her religion teacher had made her expect. Mahin snorted irreverently; Sarah's sister said no man had ever done this; and Nargez said that it amounted to an awfully heavy bag of "ifs." Sarah's sister then recited a proverb about the unpredictable ways of a bride: "A bride's fate is written on her forehead by God. Just wait and see," she said.

Into the final rows of the breadcloth was woven the much-voiced opinion that it was a cruel fate for an elderly woman to be saddled with a young co-wife, and for a young woman to be brought to a strange village as the second wife of an elderly husband. "It is not her fault," everybody said, "only bad luck."

Finally finished after the many delays, Sarah cut the breadcloth off the loom with her blunt scissors. She shook it thoroughly, folded it up, threw it onto a pile of wheat bags in the corner of her son's porch, and sent word to Abi that it was ready to be picked up. She dismantled the loom and stored the beams along the porch wall of her son's house with the help of Nargez and Mahrokh. Now the place under the walnut tree looked strangely deserted and clean, with tufts of colored wool floating in the wind amidst the surrounding rocks and garbage, but only for a day or two. When an old, battered pickup truck arrived with Jomhur and his bride and her meager belongings, welcomed in a subdued way by some of his daughters and sisters (who had even cooked a good dinner for them), the shady patch under the walnut tree lost all traces of a special place. Sarah, so as not to be in the path of her new co-wife, planned to set up the loom in her son's garden under the small apple trees. She would have fewer visitors there but more privacy. But before that she would make the journey to Mashhad with her son-in-law and her daughter, paying her own way with the loom money she had hidden in her clothes bundle.

She would be a pilgrim first and worry about everything else later.

Ramza

(Out El Kouloub, from *Ramza*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994, pp.7-12; 27-30. Permission pending.)

MY MOTHER

My mother was of Slavic origin, but had been given the Turkish name of Indje. That is how I addressed her when I got older and we became friends.

In the last few weeks of her life, the memories of the forgotten little girl she had once been came rushing to the surface; and for the first time in her conversations with me, I heard her allude to her native village. She no longer knew its name, but she remembered that it was surrounded with purplish mountains. She recalled playing in a garden next to a cottage that was beside a church. She remembered the church being ablaze with light, and candles flickering in front of images of people with haloes around their faces. A chandelier hung like a fountain of diamonds from a limitless dome. In front of an altar, a priest with blond hair, a beard, and vestments resplendent with gold embroidery, gave a benediction, arms raised. In the memory of the child who became my mother, this man was her father.

Later, in Istanbul, when she heard a servant girl singing in a foreign tongue, she recognized the sounds of the words without understanding their meaning. The girl was born in Serbia.

My mother remembered a man who came toward her along a garden path as she played beside a rosebush near her parents' house. She was not afraid of him because he was familiar to her. Unexpectedly, he sprang upon her, crushed shut her mouth with his hand, and carried her off. Night fell. She heard her mother calling, "Olga . . ." She wanted to cry out, but no sound came through her lips.

That was all she could remember of her abduction. Indje recalled this scene with horror, and throughout her life it was a recurring nightmare.

She was taken to Istanbul, to a school run by nuns, where the sisters continued to call her Olga until she was sold to a woman who became like a mother to her. My mother could not remember how she came to be sold, only that Tewfikeh Hanem, who had lost both her children, lavished affection on her and spoke to her so tenderly that her words were like a caress. My mother often said that her real parents couldn't have been kinder nor more devoted to her. Tewfikeh Hanem referred to her as Kiz, or my little girl, and the little girl called her nena, or mother.

Kiz soon forgot that she had spoken any language other than Turkish, or that she had prayed in any other but the Muslim way. Yet, she continued to attend the Rumeli Hussar School, run by the nuns. There she learned to read and write in Turkish and French. She was taught handwork and music and became as skilled in the art of embroidery as at playing the piano.

Because she was beautiful and quickly learned the social graces, Tewfikeh Hanem assured her that she would marry a prince and changed her name to Indje, meaning pearl. Tewfikeh Hanem died before she could find a prince for Indje, however. She left all her possessions to her brother, who was all the family she had. Indje was part of the inheritance. This man, a former janissary with bright red whiskers, was morose and brutal. Indje was afraid of him. Tewfikeh Hanem knew this and had made him promise that if she died he would let the little girl determine her own future.

Indje, who was then thirteen, chose to be put back on the market.

My mother's decision astonished me. I asked her why, if Tewfikeh Hanem loved her so much, she had not freed her in the first place. "What would I have done with freedom? I was not quite fourteen years old. I had no one in the world," she answered.

She was right, of course. In a big city, at that time, freedom would have been a liability for a girl without a family. The slave trader was the safest option.

Indje was at an age when girls dream of adventure. She knew that the education she had received increased her value as human merchandise and dreamed of being purchased for the harem of a prince. She might attract the prince's attention one day. She might become his favorite, maybe even a sultana...

As my young mother spun her dreams of glory, Roustoum Agha, a respected slave trader, was making his way to Istanbul from Cairo. He bought Indje along with twenty other hand-picked slaves, all natives of provinces of the Ottoman Empire. These girls had nothing in common except their status as slaves, their youth, and beauty.

Before long they were sailing for Egypt. The journey was memorable, and my mother spoke about it often. The girls were first locked up in a hold, where there was neither light nor air, and remained there for two days. The second night was so stormy that the little girls screamed and cried in terror as the boat rolled, heaved, and jolted.

Finally, when the sea grew calm, they were released and taken up on deck where a sheltered tent was constructed at the stern of the boat to protect them from the curious eyes of the crew. They were treated kindly, well fed, and enjoyed the rest of the voyage like a gaggle of school girls on an outing. My mother always ended her story by saying, "We were little more than children, you know, not much older than you are now!"

During the crossing my mother made friends with a young Circassian named Narguiss, who was her neighbor on the boat. She had been less seasick than Indje during the journey and had cared for and comforted my mother during the storm. They were about the same age, but Narguiss was the taller and stronger of the two.

Soon, they began to exchange life stories. Narguiss told my mother that she was born in the Caucasian Mountains and had known almost all her life that she would be sold into slavery by her parents. They were poor and had many children. As soon as she could understand, they had told her that she would enjoy a much better life elsewhere. They took extra care of her, feeding her well, making sure she was never fatigued or frightened. They kept her away from anyone who was ill and anything that would spoil her perfect complexion. When she reached the age of puberty, they sold her to a merchant who came periodically to the village.

Narguiss told me that she never regretted leaving her family or her native land.

The voyage from Istanbul to Cairo was to mark the beginning of a lifelong friendship between Narguiss and Indje. They prayed that life would never separate them, and their prayers were answered.

My mother remembered being transported up the Nile to the Port of Boulac in Cairo, aboard a houseboat, a *dahabiyyah,* with few windows and heavy curtains, then by closed carriage to Roustoum Agha's house.

Subsequently, my mother never traveled any other way than in a closed carriage. She never knew anything of the streets through which she passed, nor could she locate the neighborhood in which she lived, even though she knew it by name. Had she wanted to escape, after living in Cairo for twenty years, she would have been as lost as a total stranger.

This cloistered life bred insatiable curiosity in harem women, and questions were heaped upon anyone who stepped outside. Servants, eunuchs, merchants, children, anyone who had been lucky enough to see another aspect of life was asked to describe in detail everything they had seen, smelled, experienced. Thus, when I left the harem walls as a little girl, I took care to record every sight and sound I came across for my mother's benefit. She liked to compare her girlhood impressions of Istanbul with mine of Cairo. The game delighted her, and provided us with many hours of conversation.

My mother was never able to explain to me exactly where Roustoum Agha's house was located. She only knew that it was a large building, with many rooms, where the windows were fitted with thick *mashrabiyya* screens, grills, and solid metal bars. But she spoke about Roustoum Agha without hatred or rancor and even with affection. She said that he was a generous, well-intentioned man. He once had been a slave himself, a *mamluk* who had been manumitted. He ran his business with the help of his wife, Rokeyya, who was also a freed slave. Both were old and respected, trusted by the aristocracy whose harems they furnished. "They even furnished the harem of the Khedive Ismail," Indje used to say proudly.

Roustoum and Rokeyya took good care of their slaves and chose their clients with circumspection. They watched over their wards even after they were sold and visited them regularly. They always included a cautionary clause in the sales contract: if a master mistreated a slave, they had a right to take her back. And Rokeyya had unlimited access to the harems of the best families in Egypt, visiting them regularly.

When a slave was very young, they kept her with them until she came of age, raising her as if she were their own daughter. Roustoum's establishment included a real school in which little girls received instruction in all they needed to know to be good wives or servants. The children called him "father" and Rokeyya "mother."

Over the years the couple legally adopted some of the girls they had bought. When Roustoum and Rokeyya died one year apart, the daughters inherited their fortune. One of them lived in a beautiful villa in the quarter of Abbasiyya and wore the jewelry left her by Rokeyya, splendid enough to befit a princess.

Indje's stay in Roustoum Agha's house was brief, however. One day she and Narguiss were offered as a pair to a fat eunuch wearing a black cap whom Roustoum treated with great deference and who in turn trusted Roustoum implicitly. The girls were expecting to be examined meticulously, but the fat *agha* bought them sight unseen, without even bargaining.

MY FATHER

As soon as I stopped being a very little girl, the women tried to keep me from going into the men's quarters. I stubbornly refused to cooperate, and my father ultimately declared that I did not seem to be a little girl one could confine to a harem. This pleased me, of course!

At first, as long as I didn't get in the way, he put up with my presence in his study the way one puts up with a small, capricious pet curled up quietly on a divan, or on the corner of a rug. Then, I suspect, he got used to my company and seemed pleased to have me with him. He never said anything about it, but sometimes I caught a look of delight on his face that he tried unsuccessfully to conceal.

Although I was nicknamed "Whirlwind" by my grandmother and consistently misbehaved when I was in the harem, my behavior changed radically when I was with my father. In the *salamlek* I was beyond reproach. I sat for hours motionless with a book on my lap, reading or daydreaming.

Eventually, my father began to guide my readings, and when I was able to understand French, he offered me a book of poetry that he particularly loved. It was in a little niche, above the canal, that I first read *Légende des Siècles*, the poetry of Leconte de Lisle, *Hérédia*, Sully Prudhomme, and many others in volumes bound in fragrant, red leather. These books were printed on thick paper, the bindings were sewn by hand, and the covers were decorated with a vignette: a naked man, hoeing in a sunrise landscape.

My father took pleasure in molding my tastes according to his own. I was subtle enough to understand him. Without ever asking him for anything, I felt he gave me a great deal.

He was a very cultured man. I was told that my grandfather, whom I never saw, could neither read nor write and had suffered because of his ignorance.

When my father was born, my grandfather named him Farid, the "Unique," and resolved to give him the best education he could. As soon as it was time, he sent my father to study with the best teachers, the *`ulama*, at the Azhar University. They taught him the Qur'an and all that an educated and pious Muslim should know. Later, Fawzy Bey sent his son to Constantinople to one of the sultan's schools, where he spent three years learning Turkish and Persian. My father acquired a real love for the Persian language and especially for its poetry. He learned hundreds of verses by heart, and it was said that he willingly recited poetry to anyone who would listen.

By the time he was ready to go out into the world and make his way as an adult, the governors of Egypt were looking for support from European educated scholars, engineers, and jurists. An old-fashioned education, such as the one my father had received, was no longer valued.

My grandfather, who was sensitive to the climate of the times, transferred my father from Constantinople to Paris. My father was ordered to study law, but apparently this prospect did not appeal to him. He did go, however; and as he was an obedient son and also a man curious about the world, he made the best of his circumstances. He learned French fluently, joined literary clubs, and wrote poetry. Some of his poems would have appeared in a Parisian periodical, *La Revue du Progrès* had that issue not been banned from publication by the censors of Napoleon III.

Farid remained in Paris four years. When his father became seriously ill, he called him back to Cairo and had just enough time, before he died, to introduce him to the Khedive Ismail and to get him appointed to his cabinet as a translator.

My father translated all sorts of books, but his favorites remained those of the French poets. He received the work of contemporaries he had known in Paris and read his translations at his Friday night gatherings in the house overlooking the canal.

Of course, I was strictly forbidden to attend, but as my father and I grew closer, he finally agreed to let me stay behind the door of his room to listen, hidden by a heavy velvet curtain.

Oh, the joy of those Friday nights! The musicians, singers, journalists, philosophers, and playwrights who came . . . I heard Hafez Ibrahim and Sami el Baroodi reading their first works there. There were interesting conversations about literature, heated discussions and commentaries on the ideas of Gamal ed Din el Afghani, Abou Naddara, and Sheikh Muhammad Abdu on the emancipation of women and their role as nationalists.

I listened hungrily and sometimes, when I could not stand the isolation, I ventured out from behind the door, lifted a corner of the crimson curtain, and tried to make out the faces of the guests. Often, I was so drunk with the words or the rhythms I was hearing that I forgot myself until I was startled out of my reverie by my father's imperious voice. If he caught me, he ordered me back to the harem. I went. But I had heard enough to understand that I would one day do everything I could to bring about its downfall.

Weavers of the Songs
The Oral Poetry of Arab Women in Israel and the West Bank

(Mishael Maswari Caspi and Julia Ann Blessing, *Weavers of the Songs: The Oral Poetry of Arab Women in Israel and the West Bank*, Colorado Springs, CO: Three Continents Press, 1991, pp.32-4, 39, 44, 75, 90, 96, 120. Reprinted by permission.)

I. Bridal Songs

The songs that are sung before the bride use different themes. Most of these songs point to the separation of the bride from her parent's home, family and friends. Some of these songs contain only a single line and some are composed of a few lines. Most songs are short and express sadness and joy. Separation causes sorrow; anticipation of a new home, family and praise brings joy.

During the henna ceremony (where the bride and groom are anointed with henna), several songs are recited that describe the joy of the bride and honor of greeting the wedding guests. At the same time these songs include the theme of sorrow over her separation from the family.

O mother, o mother, gather the pillows and
leave the house
I have not said farewell to my sisters

Other songs serve as a warning; to look out for those who might be jealous and wish to cause a separation between the newly married couple:

He lowered his eyes and stretched his arm
They will anoint him with henna
His loins (waist) are narrow and with a kerchief
They wrap him
O my beautiful one, he who separates us will be blind

In other songs concerning the night of the henna, the theme of leaving the house is predominant. One song relates this theme:

Do not go out of my house, the wind from the west
Do not go out, o my beloved, you hurt my heart
Do not go out, o spoiled one, o spoiled one
Do not go out of my house, the wind from the east
Only death and separation hurt one's heart

Another song says:

Tears will not help you
And if there is a nail in your father's house
Take it and bring it with you

The following is a reference to the groom as he is mentioned in the house of the bride:

Tonight they anoint the groom, o Naim
Open the garden's rose, o groom, pick it up

The bride is described in the above songs as a flower about to be plucked by the groom. The dualism mirroring sorrow of separation and joy of the virtues found in the woman's role as wife and mother is seen in this song:

With peace, o sweet one, the road on the right
We said not farewell to you and returned months ago
We did not branch off from you in Beirut, O beautiful
The beloved and beautiful one, worth of
Two thousand
We did not branch off from you in Haifa

The assembly waits for the bride at the entrance to the house, and upon her arrival the singers greet her with this song:

Arise with us, o bride, they are waiting for you
The candles and the crowd waiting by the gate
Arise with us, o bride,
In the life of your uncle
Your groom, the moon, is waiting for you
by the church

Other songs are:

I. *O those who mix the henna*
Put the henna in my hands
Tonight you sleep with me
Tomorrow with my mother-in-law

O those who mix the henna
Put the henna in my shirt
Tonight you sleep with me
Tomorrow with my groom

O the mixers of the henna
Put the henna in my kerchief
Tonight you sleep with me
Tomorrow with my best man

II. *We thank the bride's father not once but*
He has given us his daughter,
the fragrance of his house
And our eyes enfold her
We give thanks and pray God's blessings
on your house
We found no flower in our garden,
but in yours

II. Lullabies

A lullaby is commonly thought of as a song used to lull a child to sleep. Lullabies have many different musical forms. Often

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a lullaby takes the form of a folk song. Sometimes it may even be a poem or a monologue from a script that is lyrically sung or hummed to a child. What is most characteristic of a lullaby is its function and content.

I. *The wind blew gently on the zizfuni,*
And when my child cried the breeze was sad.
O the eyes sleep a good and happy sleep,
And happy sleep. O my mother,
To you and to your heart.

II. *Quickly to sleep my son,*
The moon has gone down for him.
The stars in the night,
To sit and count them.
I will not doze until
The loved one awakes.

III. *I want to sing to my son*
Maybe he will appreciate my singing.
I want to sing him a song,
Perhaps when hears it he will sleep.
I caress him and sing,
Maybe the beloved one will sleep.
I cradle him on my chest.
With a blanket I cover him.
O my son if you are hungry,
I will satisfy you from my heart.
And if you are thirsty my son,
I will quench your thirst with water from my eyes.
When you bury me don't cry.
Do not be sad at my sadness,
Keep the smile on your lips,
And the happiness in your heart.

III. Lamentations

The women of the Arab world use verse to express how they deal with the burdens of life: weariness, despair, sorrow, family problems, relationship with their religion. These poems are representative of the inner life women have and how they are able to find the strength to meet their daily lives.

I. *We implore you, O God*
Except for you we are bereft of life
Furnish us with patience when destiny arrives
We turn to you, He who knows our grief
O God provide us with strength when destiny knocks
We are weary from sleeplessness and sorrow
God have mercy upon your creatures
If we could redeem him with all our worldly goods
O time, why have you stolen our joy
And left only pain and sorrow in its wake
O time, bring us no more sorrow
I wish that the moon had never waned
But remained to light our way.

II. *Come to our village, oh woman, come*
I am one of the family, ask about me
My father is like a sword, my uncle is like a spear
I am one of a well known family, ask about me
My father is like a sword, my uncle is like a spear
Come to our village, oh woman, come
And if you are approaching the grave
Take an oath to give regards to our deceased
O! mother of a child prepare yourself
(wash the shirts)
And summon the bishop
It is your due O respected woman
It is your due, shroud of silk
It is your due that your sons should walk before you
It is your due that the priest shall precede you
And pray for you in the Western Church
It is your due, O purest among women
Your son invited you to eat with him
In the name of God I don't want to burden you
Today we are together, tomorrow comes our day of separation
Why does the maiden depart so sadly?
They walked with a wedding canopy past the graveyard
Oh son, take an oath to bring her back
Your mother who is dear to you, very dear

Maghribine Folktales

(Mona Mikhail, *Images of Arab Women*, Colorado Springs, CO: Three Continents Press, 1979, pp.121-128. Reprinted by permission Donald Herdeck.)

The tales that follow, adapted and translated by G. Asfor, were chosen to show some of the qualities of women that exemplify cleverness, subtlety, courage, resourcefulness, patience and generosity. They underlie the essential completeness of women as opposed to the one-sided qualities of man as he is often portrayed in folktales and legends.

The Old Woman and the *Ghoulia*

Demons, and ghoulias in particular, represent the most terrifying spirits in the Souf and the Kabyle regions. Ghoulias are powerful man-eating creatures with scaly limbs and cactus-like heads. They are sometimes called "daughters of the green serpent." In oral accounts, special mention is made of the ghoulia's muffled voice, partly in contrast with (and to highlight) their fierceness, partly to warn infants of the dangers in heeding soft-spoken strangers. Ghoulias usually make an effort to seem likeable to their victims before devouring them. Since they do not enjoy thin people, legend has it that ghoulias attempt to feed their underweight victims before eating them. Ghoulias are particularly vulnerable to wounds of the little toe or finger. Also, they frequently attack these parts of their prey, sometimes biting them off, and sometimes merely making a small hole in them in order to suck their victim's blood whenever they please. Ghoulias have poor eyesight, often mistakenly devouring their own offspring, recognizing them too late by one or another part of the body during their grisly meal. Water is particularly harmful to them. Finally, ghoulias are extremely suspicious creatures, difficult to fool, and even more difficult to escape. As the following tale shows, the best defense against the ghoulia is calmness and trickery. This tale is refreshing in its depiction of the woman possessing a quality much admired in Islam—the ability to combat and conquer the supernatural through cleverness and subtlety. Even more admirable and rare is the ability to create and produce verse in such paralyzing circumstances.

In the Souf, women usually grind wheat during the long, cold winter nights, storing the flour in sheepskin bags. One night, an old woman was grinding grain, singing to herself to lend rhythm and energy to her work. Suddenly, she felt the presence of a *ghoulia* which had quietly entered the room. Frightened and anxious to maintain an outward composure, the old woman did not stop singing. The *ghoulia* was enchanted with the old woman's beautiful song, and decided to entertain itself before devouring the poor woman. Knowing the fate that awaited her before sunrise, the old woman continued to sing, meanwhile turning her millstone more quickly. The noise of the grinding stones disturbed the *ghoulia*, for it had a difficulty hearing the song. Enjoying the victim's mortal terror, the *ghoulia* said in a muffled voice:

Sing well
But turn slowly
the night is long...

Taking heart and concentrating her courage, the old woman complied, this time singing a song of her own invention,

O Ahmed my neighbor,
What has entered my home?
Its hand is scaly
Its hand is thistled...

The clear notes awakened the neighbor who understood the woman's distress. The fine description left no doubt in Ahmed's mind; one of the many *ghoulias* of the Souf had come to claim a victim.

Saying a prayer and loading his gun, the good neighbor scaled a wall, entered the old woman's house unnoticed and shot the monster.

This is how the brave old woman was saved. Her songs conquered the *ghoulia*.

The King's Daughter and the Rose-Tree

This tale is basically one of perseverance in the name of love—a king's love for his daughter, and a woman's love for her man in the face of sabotage and uncertainty.

Once upon a time there was a king who had seven daughters. The youngest was his favorite. The others were jealous and visited a witch, wishing to place a curse on their youngest sister.

"Your father will soon travel," said the witch. "Your youngest sister will ask him for a rose-tree."

When the king asked his daughters what they would like for presents, one daughter requested fine silks, another jewels, another perfumes. When her turn came, the youngest requested a rose-tree. "What a pity that is all you want!" answered the king. "I would bring you the moon itself!" Mysteriously, the young woman said, "Father do not forget..."

But the king forgot, and on his way home, his camel began to sink in the sand; water turned to pitch. And the king then remembered his youngest daughter's wish. He turned around, entered great cities, seeking a rose-tree. But the merchants and shopkeepers pretended not to understand, and spoke of other things. One day an old man took the king aside, whispering, "Your majesty, speak not of rose-trees! He who asks you for this wishes you harm!" But the king explained the circumstances to the old man who replied, "Go to the Magic Cave. Take a sacrificial lamb. Two dogs will emerge, one black, one white. If the white dog emerges first, you may enter the cave; but, if it is the black dog, you are lost."

The king did as he was bid. As he placed the lamb before the Magic Cave, a black dog attacked the sacrifice. Suddenly, a white dog emerged and drove the black dog away.

"Enter!" Inside the king heard a great howling of genies. Despite his fear, the king entered a small chamber. There he saw a handsome prince who asked, "Stranger, what seek you?" The king explained. "I am at once the old man who sent you here," the prince replied, "and the rose-tree which your daughter has requested. Tell her to prepare herself, for one dark and stormy night, I shall visit her."

The king returned to his country. His jealous daughters were upset that he had forgotten the rose-tree, thinking that their youngest sister would now survive the witch's curse. Soon, however, a terrible storm broke out, striking terror in the palace. At midnight, the prince appeared to the youngest daughter. When he left her just before dawn, he put gold coins under her pillow. Her inquisitive sisters found the gold that day, and kept it.

Every night, the same thing happened: the prince left a gold bracelet, a gold ring, a gold necklace... and the jealous sisters stole these gifts of love. And, when they could not steal love itself, they planted poisoned needles in the matrimonial bed, wounding the prince, who went away to die.

His beloved waited for him every night in vain, listening to her sister's laughter. Her pain was so great that she left her father's house to look for her prince. She crossed deserts and forests, plains and mountains, dying of thirst and hunger, her feet covered with bleeding wounds. Reaching the top of a high cliff, she found a lion and its mate. "If the prince knew our hearts would cure him," said the fearsome beasts, "He would surely kill us."

The princess heard this, and waited until the lions were asleep. She killed them with a knife. She took their hearts and walked a great distance until she reached a cave. It was the Magic Cave, where her father had sought the rose-tree. Entering the Magic Cave, she heard sounds of great mourning among the genies. "With God's help," said the princess, "I shall cure your prince." The genies laughed at her, saying that a mere woman could not cure their master when the world's greatest healers had failed.

"Bring me some fire and a pot," said the woman. Boiling the lion's hearts, she dipped a goose-quill in the liquid and touched the prince's many wounds. Slowly, all the needles fell from him, and his wounds were healed. She placed gold jewels beneath his pillow, and when the prince awakened from this feverish sleep, he recognized the woman who loved him.

The genies were amazed at the great knowledge of the princess, celebrating her wedding with fine ceremony.

Pragmatic Morality

Islam and Family Planning in Morocco

(Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn A. Early, eds., *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 91-101. Reprinted by permission.)

No questions challenge the status quo as much as those concerning the family. In Muslim nations from Indonesia to Morocco, religious scholars, ordinarily quiet on political matters, have been mustered to counter proposed government-sponsored changes to laws and practices which touch on traditional family order. Conservative Muslim reformers and activists have been particularly adamant that government-sponsored family planning programs are contrary to Islamic doctrine. They hold that, rather than to limit population, what is needed is to extend the knowledge and skills for developing agriculture and making the desert bloom.—Eds.

The birth of children, like many other things in this life, can sometimes be too much of a good thing. Over the millennium and one-half of their history, Muslims have struggled to increase the size of their families and community, fighting pestilence and disease to keep their children alive. In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, control over disease and better sanitation brought higher life expectancy, and populations rose dramatically. This increase in population has for the first time brought under scrutiny by the formulators of public policy aspects of Muslim family life that previously had been left to the guidance of Muslim community leaders.

Traditionally, Muslims have been told by religious and community teachings to bear large families and thereby increase the size and strength of the Muslim community. However, the rise in population growth rates in Muslim nations, as in much of the developing world, has put pressure on limited economies. The resulting economic constraints have led technocrats to call for a limit on population growth in order to relieve the resource crunch. This in turn has resulted in some confusion among Muslims who have been consistently taught that large families are valued socially and religiously. In fact, contraception threatens the traditional family order.

Two fundamental questions arise: given the combination of religious pronouncements and Middle Eastern social emphasis on family life, does Islam say anything about birth control? What is the Muslim position on limiting family size? These questions have particular import for the Muslim nations with high population growth rates.

People tend to take cues from what their religion allows. Sources which show the Islamic positions include the Qur'an, the *sunna* and *hadith* (words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad), and to a lesser extent the volumes of jurisprudence texts and commentaries which discuss all of the previously mentioned sources. The revelations of the Qur'an and the words and example of the Prophet Muhammad all point to the key position of family in society. Family, from the point of view of Islam, is the means of organizing the Muslim community, the institution which regulates human behavior and puts the chaos of unordered sexual conduct at bay.

According to the Qur'an, marriage is highly recommended. As Omar (the second caliph of Islam) said, "Only old age and sinfulness can stop one from marriage."

> *By another sign He gave you wives from among yourselves that you might live in joy with them, and planted love and kindness in your hearts. Surely there are signs in this for thinking men. (30:21)*

Family order, as based on revelation, assumes a patriarchal form, with husbands taking the lead in aspects of family law: marriage, divorce (repudiation), inheritance. Present-day religious scholars sum up the relationship of family members as one in which men provide the wherewithal for the family, women bear and raise the children, and children obey their parents. The Qur'an states:

> *Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous. (25:74)*

Marriage is not obligatory, for one basic reason—its cost. Before men marry, they are expected to have the means to support a wife and a family if they choose to have children.

> *But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden lain on it greater than it can bear. (2:233)*

So a man marries when God grants the means to do so; women marry when God provides the husband. It is then her duty to follow his lead, for men have a degree above women" (2:228).

> *The best woman is she who delights her husband and obeys him when he commands her, and, in his absence, looks after his wealth and dignity. (Prophetic hadith)*

The importance of marriage and children to both society and individuals has not changed, but demographic changes have brought about a need for rethinking how a solid family can be maintained despite limited assets.

Islam has no organized clergy and has no hierarchy of leadership. Country by country, Muslim scholars (singular, *'alim*; plural, *'ulama*) speak authoritatively for their national constituency, just as in the early days of the community, those men who were scholars of Islamic texts—the Qur'an, the hadith and sunna, legal commentaries—contributed to the formulation of legal positions on questions undecided by the Qur'an, the first and most decisive source of Islamic law. The only Qur'anic mention of an issue related to family planning pertains to *wa'd*, a practice of exposing unwanted female children because they were seen as a nonproductive burden on a poor family. In condemning that practice, the Qur'an describes Judgment Day as "when the infant girl, buried alive, is asked for what crime she was slain" (81:7-8). Muslims interpreted this verse as an absolute prohibition of female infanticide. If the Qur'an is silent on a matter, the next recourse is to the sunna and hadith of the Prophet and his companions. Other matters are determined by the 'ulama drawing analogies to existing Qur'anic or hadith texts.

Religious scholars hold themselves responsible for correctly interpreting Islamic sources for the Muslim community...the 'ulama serve as the custodians of the community and see themselves as keepers of the well-being of their people.

Knowledge of the Qur'an, the Prophet's statements and precedents, and the intricacies of the jurisprudence texts for their particular school of Islam is not easily come by. A truly learned 'alim has invested decades of study in Islamic sciences and Arabic language before taking on the legal texts themselves...But within the constricts of these sources, they can formulate new interpretations best suited to community needs.

As the areas of law where 'ulama preside in Morocco have diminished over time and as more authority for legal matters has been vested in the state, the 'ulama have become particularly protective of their last preserves, family law and religious practice. In fact, given the dictates of the Qur'an on family law, they see the two as inextricably connected.

To understand Muslim positions on family matters, I conducted several years of research in Morocco during the late 1970s, including interviews with 'ulama, scholars of religion, professors, writers, officials of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs—and other religious leaders concerning Islam and family planning. Below are two representative interviews with Professors Zahraoui and al-Arhali, both of the College of Arabic Language Studies in Marrakesh, to give a sense of the questions asked regarding contraception as well as the scholar's responses.

I. Interview with Professor Zahraoui

Professor Zahraoui and I met in his living room in a new villa in Marrakesh. A renowned scholar of Islam, he also taught comparative religions and referred throughout our discussion to comparisons to Christian doctrine and practices. According to Professor Zahraoui:

"If a female child were born to a family in pre-Islamic times, the family would be disappointed, and the infant's life often would be in peril. Once Islam was introduced, there was no religious value put on the sex of the infant. Various other traditions, however, have questioned this equal valuation of the sexes. In Paris in the Middle Ages, there

was a question as to whether a woman were not half a person and half a devil.

Recent economic development has changed the situation. Islam has traditionally advocated a division of labor between the male and the female. The duty of the wife is to work in the home and bring up the children. This entails taking care of their needs and teaching them proper morals and ethics as well as instructing them in everyday concerns. Well-trained children are the basis of a good society. If the mother is absent from the home, working or for other reasons, then who is to care for the children?

Therefore, the woman has an economic role as important as that of the man. Each has half: he works outside while she cares for the house and the children. There is no place for unemployment in this system as both must work for the family unit to succeed.

Marriage, although basic, is required in Islam only if certain conditions are met. At times it is required: if the man has money enough to support a family and desires marriage, also if he will commit socially disturbing acts if he remains single. At times marriage is forbidden: if the husband has no money and cannot support a wife and if he has no special desire for a wife. But marriage may also be optional: the man has a moderate desire for women, has enough money—if he wishes to marry or not to marry, either is permitted.

A corollary to this is divorce. For the good of both the individuals concerned and society in general, spouses should not be forced to remain together contrary to their wishes. Under such constraint, one is likely to commit immoral actions. As couples are free to marry, they must also be free to divorce.

This brings us to the question of contraception. We in Morocco would like to be economically powerful. Use of contraception is necessary to maintain material success.

Application of contraception in Islam brings up various questions. One is that of fate (qadar). It is very difficult to understand the real effect of this concept in life and to determine the cause of actions. We cannot say that God has done all that is done. Also we cannot wait to see what God is going to do. We must take action on our own behalf. One cannot say that 'Allah is the provider' (al-Raziq) or 'there is nothing on the earth but God provides for it' and then sit and wait for God to provide for you. One can say that God provides and then go out and find the means by which it can take place.

Human power has its roots in economic production. It is better for us to confront the situation by increasing production, not decreasing our population. We need more production in the agricultural and industrial sectors. In Morocco we need total planning, more dams, water for irrigation, more animals.

The question of personal contraceptive use is another matter to be considered separately from national policy. People practice ʿazl (interruption of sexual intercourse). Mothers use it for health reasons.

ʿAzl is a means of preventing pregnancy. So birth control pills are permitted when their use is necessary. If they are unnecessary, then their use is forbidden. Included as valid reasons for contraceptive use are financial problems. Islam considers lack of money and the inability to bring up more children properly to be valid reasons to employ contraceptives.

Abortion is another matter. Some schools believe that abortion is legal before 120 days of pregnancy have elapsed. Only after this time does the spirit enter the fetus, causing it to be formally created.

Religiously, for Muslims, abortion is forbidden. However, exceptions can be made for health reasons. Even if the mother's life or that of the unborn child lies in the balance, two factors must be weighed in making the decision. It is a question of choice, and abortion in this case, although not forbidden, is not a good thing to do."

II. Interview Al-Arhali Al-Faruq

I met with Professor al-Arhali at the College for Arabic Language Studies in Marrakesh. As I formulated my basic questions, Professor al-Arhali sat back, then threw his arms out wide and stated in an authoritative voice, "The trouble is that no one in Marrakesh has any morals." Students within hearing range exchanged startled glances and walked faster in the opposite direction. He then went on. According to Professor al-Arhali:

"The world is filled with problems, but as each disease has a medicine to treat it, each problem has a solution if only it can be found.

The world today is plagued by wars and the works of Satan. There are two major areas of concern: first is the problem of morals. People are increasingly seeking greater freedom in their moral standards, abandoning what was understood for centuries as traditional behavior. Second, underlying the first problem, people don't understand either the problems or each other, which keeps them from coming to grips with the problem. Without proper respect for others it is impossible to have good morals, so the morals they espouse are increasingly corrupt.

Now, as pertains to family planning, we must first understand that the family is the world, and all else (in terms of morals) proceeds from that basis.

If the family were taught well, everything else in the world would be all right as well. Therefore teachings and knowledge are necessary in order to know the necessities and the way of life. We must know what are our obligations to perform, and from performing them good will come. The world is based on these principles. If good is taught, good will come of it; if evil is taught; evil will result. This is only reasonable, and reason is the natural basis of our religion.

Family planning refers to the way the parents bring up their families. Birth control separates a man and a woman, restricting them from having children. Islam approves of family planning, because Islam is all about teaching children *well so that they can distinguish between good and evil by degrees.*

Birth control in the sense of limitation is not consistent with the tenets of Islam. First of all, we are taught by Muhammad to Marry, have children, and multiply so that I will be pleased with you on Judgment Day.' Thus marriage is institutionalized in Islam.

Traditionally woman is characterized as being pleasant and chaste; man is stronger, being intended for grasping power and fighting wars. The combination of the two is needed. By cooperation between a husband and a wife—some help from inside the home given, some help from outside the home—they can work to make all strong and well in their life together. The husband works outside the home to provide the economic well-being as opposed to the woman who works inside the house and is specially concerned with teaching the children. The arrangement of the household points up the differences between man and woman.

Adultery, which is practiced openly everywhere but in Islam, is a great challenge to marriage and good morals. Currently many women don't have children, negating the purpose of marriage. Each says that she has the freedom to do what she wants (which implies doing immoral things). The correct path is to bear children, an act neither the husband nor wife can perform alone. There true Islam would return to marriage.

As far as use of birth control to limit a family goes, as long as the husband and wife are agreed on its use, then there is no problem. This is true even if they wish not to have children. They have the right not to have any at all.

Abortion is prohibited, for it constitutes killing the fetus. Even if the husband and wife are agreed on the abortion, it is still forbidden. Abortion is forbidden whatever the advising doctor says, even if the woman is sick and will die."

Contradictions are evident in the two interviews above...Zahraoui and al-Arhali make five points worth investigating. First, both scholars assert, al-Arhali more adamantly the importance of family as the basis of society and the bulwark of community morals and order. The integrity of the family must be preserved at all costs. Their arguments seem to indicate that although the sanctity of the family unit must not be violated, certain adjustments in line with contemporary pressures may be considered.

Something already in the process of readjustment is the highly traditional division of labor between men and women: wives remain at home with the children and husbands support the household. Although this division is still the rule in Morocco, given the high incidence of unemployment—about 30 percent in Morocco—women often find themselves more employable than their husbands and venture into the workplace as domestic servants or other low-paid labor to support the family. Widowed, divorced, or deserted women heads of households become the primary wage earners. Despite the woman's work outside the home, she will still be primarily responsible for the household as well. Generally, any help she receives will come from female relatives.

A second point to which both scholars referred is the question of birth control. The term in Arabic (*tahdid al-nasl*) translated as "limitation," or "restriction" of progeny. "Family planning" (*tanzim al-usra* or *takhtit al-'a'ili*)—with the meaning of ordering, arranging resources for one's family—was far more acceptable. It did not imply a limiting of family size, but rather the sense of best determining how to accomplish a goal.

Third, both emphasized that contraception itself is not a recommended practice; ideally Muslims would pursue large families. Reality, however, requires compromises. Zahraoui referred to the doctrine of necessity being above the law. This doctrine is used to reconcile questionable, even illicit, practices with reality. The context of a situation may impel a good Muslim to practices that when isolated are not permitted. Thus, even abortion, although he called it religiously prohibited, may be permitted. Another situation which surfaced in interviews was the question of sterilization of the woman or the man. All 'ulama interviewed agreed that sterilization is unlawful and argued that it is prohibited because it is an unnatural practice, negating what God has created.

Fourth, any use of contraception is contingent upon the consent of both parties, the husband and the wife. As in the classical jurisprudence texts, which state that the consent of the wife is necessary for the husband to employ 'azl, given the variety of contraceptive measures used today, a general guideline is that both must agree covers any eventuality of contraceptive use...they viewed family planning negatively, stated that contraception is permissible religiously so long as both the husband and the wife agree to its use. This puts the husband and the wife on an equal footing in the matter; so far as the religious authorities are concerned. If either refuses, contraceptive practice becomes illicit.

Another way to look at this issue focuses on responsibility. The 'ulama have publicly cautioned husbands and wives as to the critical nature of family composition and family stability. Beyond that, it is up to each family unit to govern itself in light of its particular needs and situation. The responsibility for the health of their family falls upon the husband and the wife. This emphasis may signal slight movement toward a more egalitarian view of family responsibility. It is echoed by government policy makers. In the early 1970s, the physician who headed the Moroccan Family Planning Office announced at a national meeting that he considered it his duty as a Moroccan to ensure that no Moroccan male ever received a vasectomy. In May 1990, a banner stretched above the largest cafe in Marrakesh. It read: "Family planning is also the responsibility of the male." To an outside observer it appears that government programs are beginning to catch up with the 'ulama's reasoning. In this one case of permitting contraception, women have equal status with men.

Political Ideology and Women's Economic Participation in Egypt

(Soha Abdel Kader, *Women and Economic Development in the Arab World, Beirut: The institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World*, Beirut, Lebanon: Beirut University College, pp. 37-43. Reprinted by permission Julinda Abu Nasr, Ph.D.)

The Nasser Era (1952-1970): The 1952 Revolution brought in a period of socialism encouraging equality for all, regardless of sex and a policy of economic self-reliance through rapid industrialization, two factors which had a direct effect on the economic participation of Egyptian women. The revolutionary government of 1952, in the National Charter of 1962, said:

> *Woman must be regarded as equal to man and she must therefore shed the remaining shackles that impede her free movement, so that she may play a constructive and profoundly important part in shaping the life of the country.*

The revolutionary government enacted a number of laws designed to ensure the full participation of all able members. Compulsory education for all at the primary level (i.e., six years of schooling) and free education at all levels were suggested as investment in human resources.

Compulsory and Free Education Laws: Compulsory and free education, however, had positive effects on female education in several ways:

(1) the literacy rate of women in the labor force greatly increased, partly because of compulsory education laws, but also because of adult and functional literary classes introduced in factories and other places of work. In 1974, 46% of women in the labor force were literate;

(2) mainly as an outcome of free education, there was a major increase in the participation of women in higher education. This, of course, applied to both sexes, while the rate of population increase from 1952 to 1977 was 2.4 percent per year, the rate of increase in university level enrollment was 7.5 percent per year. However, during the same period the ratio of male to female students steadily decreased from 13.1:1 to 1.8:1;

(3) there was a steady increase in the enrollment of women in the practical faculties, i.e., medicine, engineering, veterinary diseases, pharmacy and dentistry, all long considered exclusively male domains.

Labor Laws: The labor laws that prevailed in Egypt up to 1959 were not very protective for men, women or children. Workers were not entitled to daily rest periods or a weekly day of rest; wages were not received at regular intervals and often amounted to less than the amount stipulated in the contract; and workers were denied the right to strike or to form trade unions. According to one source, marriage was considered a sufficient reason for dismissing a woman from her job (Hamman, 1980.)

The Labor Code of 1959 stipulated that women be provided with social services by the employers, seating accommodations where appropriate, two half-hour breaks per day for mothers of infants during the 18 months following delivery, and maternity leaves (50 days). It also stipulated that women cannot be dismissed from work as a result of pregnancy or delivery, and that any establishment with over 100 women should provide a day-care center. Further, the labor code set minimum wages, working hours, a share of the profits and the recognition of labor associations.

Egypt's industrial take-off in the 60s coupled with the decline in the rate of female illiteracy and labor legislation resulted in the increased participation of women in industry. The percentage of females working in agriculture or females working in agriculture, as a proportion of the total number of females working, declined from 43% in 1961 to 26% in 1971 and then to 23% in 1976. At the same time industry expanded its female labour force from an insignificant 3.3% in 1961, to all 11.7% in 1971, to 13% in 1976.

However, the most noticeable change in the female labor force is that almost 15% of them have a university education, and it is they who account for virtually all growth in female employment in Egypt over the past two decades. Educated women hold 26.3% of the scientific, professional and technical positions in the country, although they represent only 8.8% of the total paid work force. These jobs include teaching (which absorbs 40% of the female professional workers) and medicine, the two fields which have traditionally been considered acceptable for females because of the possibility of continued sex segregation while in the working world. The two together account for 90% of all women in the professional and technical fields.

Egyptian women gained the right to vote and stand for political office in 1956, when the constitution stated that voting is the right of all Egyptians and that it is their duty to participate in public affairs. This 'right' aroused various reactions, and women's unions were active in stimulating women to register on voting lists.

The Sadat Era (1970-1981): Although at first he followed Nasser's steps claiming repeatedly that his regime was only a continuation of his predecessor, after the 1973 October war he began to rule in his own right. From 1973 to 1975 there was an almost 180 degree turnabout in the country's political ideology. Socialism and public sector economy were replaced by the Open Door Policy. This action was accompanied by a complete break with the USSR and a rapprochement with the USA. This was followed two years later by the Peace Initiative and the resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel. The change in the State's political ideology and economic policy directly affected the nature of Egyptian women's participation in the labor force.

Open Door Policy: The Open Door Policy was to encourage private initiative as well as foreign investment in Egypt. One result was that a number of multinational firms began to do business in Cairo, creating thousands of new, relatively well-paid jobs traditionally defined as women's work—namely secretarial work. As a result, a young female graduate of university or even secondary school, with a knowledge of foreign languages (especially English), typing and maybe shorthand, could easily obtain a job paying from 300 to 500 Egyptian pounds a month—a salary far above anything she would get if she worked as a school teacher, a civil servant or even a professional engineer or doctor.

Thus, while the Nasser era's state-dominated economy—with its emphasis on self-reliance and speedy industrialization—drew upon lower class semi-literate women, the Open Door Policy benefited a minority of middle and upper-class educated women. As a result, 1976 saw the percentage of women engaged in manufacturing decline. It is worthwhile noting, however, that a number of Egyptian women emerged as independent investors and owners of private business firms. The major drawback of this development is, as a commentator notes, "economic development will only be liberating for women when it propels large numbers of them into the wage labor force" (1980). Women working as secretaries in foreign companies or in joint ventures still represent an elite and a minority in Egyptian society.

Migration of Egyptians to Oil-Rich Countries: At the same time as the Open Door Policy was the astronomical increase in the number of Egyptians working in oil-rich countries mainly Saudi Arabia, Libya and Kuwait. By 1980 Egypt was one of the major labor-exporting countries in the region. It is estimated that between 1.5 and 2 million Egyptians work abroad. These include professionals as well as skilled and semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers so that Egyptians are heavily represented in both high and low levels of manpower in Arab labor migration.

This migratory trend has affected Egyptian women in a number of significant ways. First, a new phenomenon unprecedented in Egyptian history has been the migration of increasing numbers of unaccompanied women. These women are either single or married but not accompanied by the husband. The National Center for Sociological and Criminological Research estimated that one-third of Egyptian immigrants are females. As the demand for teachers in girls' schools is high, a large percentage of these women work as school teachers; thus the majority of them are professionals or sub-professional whitecollar workers. Some observers predict that these women, upon returning home, may influence the scope and direction of private investment in Egypt.

Women also benefit from the temporary migration of Egyptian labor in still another way: many jobs vacated by men are now occupied by women. One recent survey reported that Egyptian women are currently very highly represented in the upper echelons of government service. The survey predicted that in the near future more women than men will be working directors, managers etc. Furthermore, numerous studies indicate that in agriculture many of the manual workers are females. Women have also invaded the armed forces, performing clerical jobs that traditionally were performed by men (Sullivan 1980).

Personal Status Laws: Egyptian women, like women elsewhere in the Arab world, have to cope with the dilemma of traditional family law governing the relations of the sexes within the family co-existing with legislation favorable to sexual equality outside the family. In July 1979, the People's Assembly (following President Sadat's personal initiative) enacted Law 44 of 1979 which amended the Personal Status Law in effect since 1929. According to the provisions of the new law, a woman had the right to ask for and secure a divorce within one year of her husband's taking a second wife. This is a restriction on polygamy. Also, a divorced women who has custody of her children is entitled to remain in the marital home until the children reach the legal age, after which they move to live with the father. Though these amendments were minimal when compared to the demands feminists have been calling for over half a century, they were considered a breakthrough in the sense that they improved the bargaining position of women within the family.

Political Rights: As part of the constitutional reforms following the signing of the March 1979 treaty with Israel—reforms designed to prepare Egypt for a new era of peace—thirty seats in Parliament were reserved for women. This move was heralded in the hope that it would help women to gain new rights, or at least protect rights previously gained. These women were dramatically put to the test recently when the higher constitutional court ruled that changes made in the Personal Status Laws during Sadat's time were unconstitutional, and the family laws of 1929 remained the only valid ones. The female members of parliament were mocked by public opinion for remaining totally silent in the face of this ruling.

Conclusion: Although female enrollment at all levels of education has increased steadily in both absolute and relative terms, the continued relative shortage of Egyptian women in the educational system remains a serious problem. While the percentage of females in professional faculties has increased, most women in higher education are still studying relatively low prestige subjects such as education, social sciences, etc. It will be quite some time before Egyptian women will earn 50 percent of university degrees and contribute their full potential to the country. The November 1976 Census indicated that 984,000 females were gainfully employed, yet males still contributed 85.6% of the labor force. There is a realization that much female labor is in seasonal agricultural tasks and in the unrecorded informal sector, and that these women are for the most part illiterate, unskilled and underpaid. It will be a long time before Egyptian women share equally in the fruits as well as the burdens of development.

Masculine Ideology or Feminine Mystique? A Study of Writings on Arab Women

(Mona N. Mikhail, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Cairo, 1993. Reprinted by permission.)

Male Arab authors in the majority, ever since the nineteenth century, have on the whole been empathetic for the enfranchisement of women. The man primarily responsible for this was the *Allama* (Reformer) Rifa'a Rafi'al-Tahtawi, born in 1801, credited for having championed the cause which called for the education of women.

European writings on the Arab East, particularly the strictly fictional works, were exposeès for murky passions and bizarre doings. Corresponding to the period of early colonialism, especially in North Africa, the 'other' is romanticized to extreme degrees. The journey is the literary device most often used. The landscape, women, and their status, become focal themes.

Generations of Arab writers in the decades that followed, who were equally enticed by the West, tended to 'exoticize' or 'occidentalize' their experiences. Taha Hussayn, Tawfiq al-Hakim, Al-Tayib Salih, and Suhayil Idris, amongst many other Arab authors, poets and writers, searched for an Occident (West) which 'promised infinite possibilities', set on voyages seeking new 'sexual spaces', sought a route of escape from the dictates of bourgeois morality of their societies in search of new freedoms.

In 1872 Tahtawi published a monograph entitled *Al-Dalil al-Amin lil Banat wa al-Banin* (Guide for the Benefit of Young Men and Women) where he outlines his reformist opinions. He demands, for instance, equal opportunities for the education of women which he assures his public will result in the creation of a more stable and harmonious family unit...In 1873, one year after the publication of his *Guide*, the first girls' school Al-Sioufiah was founded.

The poets at the turn of this century called for the emancipation of women. It is to them that we turn now to look at the importance of their message.

Ahmed Shawqi, Prince of Poets, reiterates his belief in the true teachings of the Qur'an concerning women:

> *This is the Messenger of God who did not curtail the rights of women believers. Seeking knowledge was a law followed by his learned women. The name of Sukayna was every where ... She related the Tradition and explained the eloquent verses of the book ... (Khoury, 1 27).*

Nizar Qabani, the well known Syrian poet and diplomat who has perhaps more than any other contemporary poet become associated with his feminizing attitudes towards women, has been called both the detractor and champion of women...Very often adopting the first person 'I', he wrote of the urbanized Arab women, superficially Westernized, and her situation; he also pointed his finger in accusation at her vanity and superficiality:

You want
You want like all women
Solomon's treasures
Like all women
Pools of perfumes
Combs of ivory
A horde of slaves
You want a lord
Who will sing your glory like a parrot...
Who washes your feet in wine
O Shahrazad
Like all women
You want me to give you the stars from the heavens
Banquets of manna
Banquets of comforts
You want silks from Shanghai
Furs from Isphahan
I am no prophet who throws his rod...
And the sea breaks open
O Shahrazad
I am a mere worker from Damascus
I dip my loaf of bread in blood
My feelings are modest, my wages too
I believe in bread and prophets
And like others dream of love ... (Mikhail, 60)

As the well-known critic, Catherine Stimpson, in a study of feminist writings, carefully warns us, "A male writer may speak of, for, to and from the feminine. He cannot speak of, for, to, and from the female".

We can, therefore, safely assert that much of the writings about women, especially the poetry by men, was a search for a total, comforting vision of kind femininity. If we turn to writings by women, we note a constant effort to explore and challenge the harsh legacy of neglect on the one hand, and the demands of a rising feminism...Arab women writers have raised high their voices demanding rectification of these unacceptable conditions.

The Iraqi poet, Nazik al-Malaika, succinctly and poignantly sums up the women's plight of benign neglect.

When she closed her eyes
No face faded, no lips quivered
Doors heard no retelling of her death
No curtain was lifted to air the room of grief
No eyes followed her coffin
to the end of the road
Only a memory of a lifeless form
passing in some lane
If I could reach the sky
I wonder if I
My hands will move the earth
But if I
If I could find a seed

A seed of peace
I wonder if I
My heart will weave
Garments of delight

Fadwa Tuqan, a Palestinian noted poet, focused her writings on the Arab-Israeli conflict and specifically the oppression of the Palestinians after having published extensively lyric love poetry:

In vain, there is no echo, no sound
Come back. Nothing is here but desolation
Silence and the shadows of death.

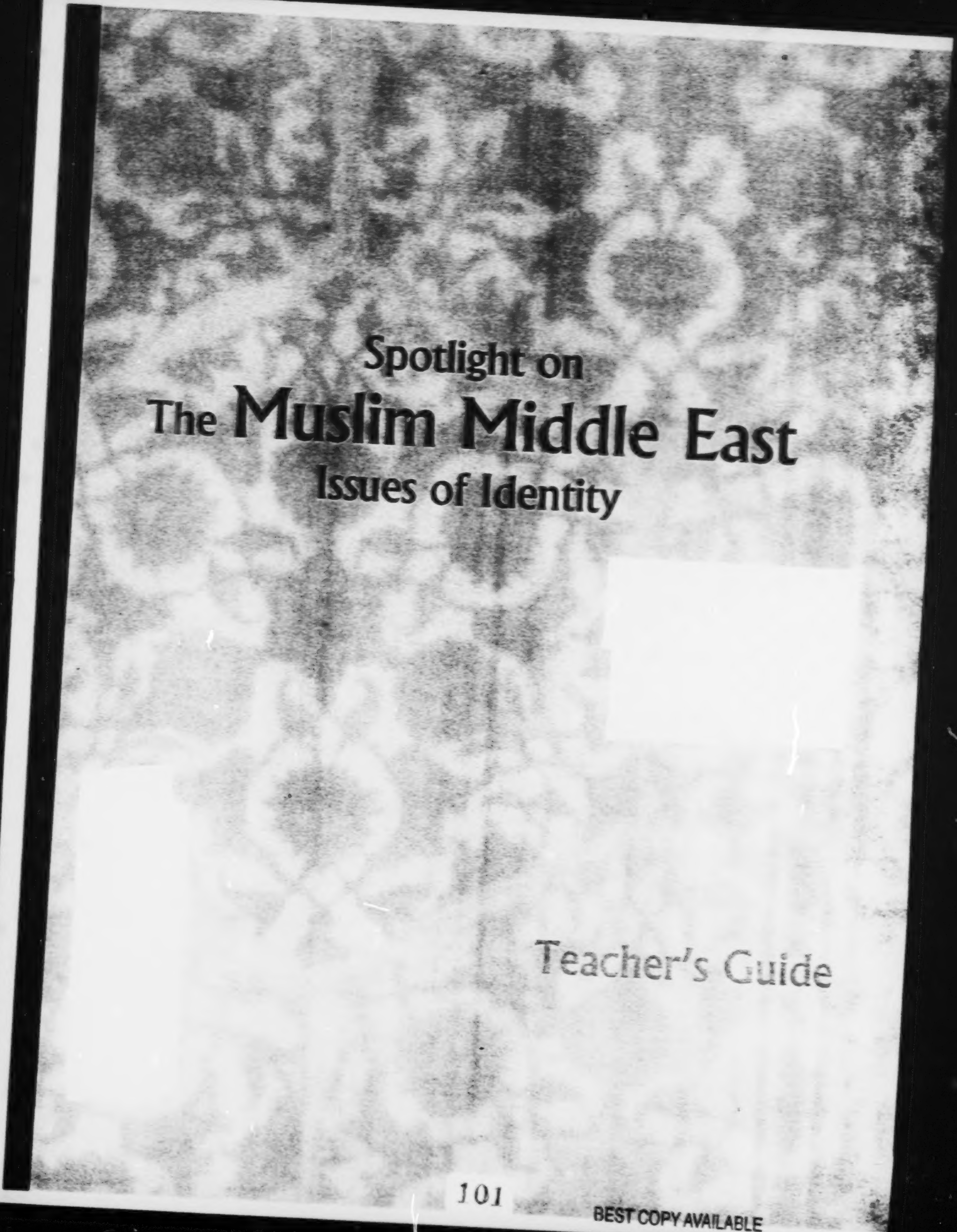
Ever since the turn of the century Arab women writers were seriously engaged in making their voices heard. Quite understandably, the women of the middle and upper-middle classes the good fortune of receiving at least a primary education, were the ones who succeeded in finding publishers who would even consider printing their work.

It is only in the fifties that women writers began to write enough fiction and poetry which for the first time can be counted amongst lasting aesthetic contributions. The period between the fifties and the seventies has been marked by major intellectual currents. The Western model was to be both admired and avoided. These contradictory tendencies resulted in creating a conflict in the Arab nations which resulted in the loss of traditional values and did not replace them with any ideology which was useful for the society. The turmoil gripping Middle Eastern societies in the last four decades is powerfully echoed in these writings.

The Arab bourgeois class which emerged and grew between and after the two World Wars had forever shaken the established feudal economic structures. Large numbers of women had moved into the labor force as well as into the classroom but the cultural, spiritual and scientific freedoms achieved by women were not matched by emotional freedoms. Arab women writers, more than any other segment of society, reflect on these matters.

North African women writers continue to write both in Arabic and French. Many have chosen to live in self-imposed exiles, dealing with the well known questions of alienation that their fellow male authors have had to face.

Most of these writers, be they men or women, shouting a cause or explaining femininity, are justly celebrated not only because of their graceful use of prose and poetry, but mostly because their writings and their lives have touched a suffering generation. Rebels in their own way, Arab women writers continue to write memorable literature. They conjure and construct worlds of remarkable and unremarkable people, and ultimately their ambition is to understand themselves and others in terms of their collective fate.



Spotlight on
The Muslim Middle East
Issues of Identity

Teacher's Guide

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The Muslim Middle East
Issues of Identity

Teacher Guide

Edited by
Hazel Sara Greenberg
and Liz Mahony

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Preface

Hazel Sara Greenberg, Director of Curriculum, The American Forum for Global Education

Developing curriculum on the Muslim Middle East is a difficult and often controversial chore. The first decision revolves around the title. What do we mean by the Muslim Middle East? Why did we choose to only include the Muslim Middle East? Does this choice mean that the singular focus of the guide will be the question of religion?

The reason we selected the Muslim Middle East as our organizing center is quite basic. At the present time, the Middle East is often misunderstood. At our initial meetings with our consulting scholars, we unanimously determined that we were interested in presenting a multi-dimensional point of view for a study of the Middle East. In order to do this, we needed to scrap some of our stereotypes about the region as well as the concept of the Middle East as being "exotic." We are looking at a geographic region which is as far north as Central Asia to as far south as the Emirates, east to India and west through North Africa. In this vast region the overwhelming element which binds the people is Islam. However, it is not always the same aspects of Islam for all the people. It is the Muslim Middle East because over 90% of the population embraces Islam; it is the Middle East but also known as the Near East or Western Asia because of its geographic location between Europe, Asia and Africa as the juncture of the three continents.

The primary purpose of this project is to rethink the Middle East from different vantage points, using different themes. This is a complex and complicated region of the world. There have been many historical influences throughout the centuries and mass migrations of peoples have traveled through this region. Each of these groups, from Semitic to Caucasian to Turkic, has left a small part of their culture and their history. They have had religious influence as well as ethnic influence. There has been influence from the West also in the guise of nationalism. Since World War II, feminist thinking began to prevail among the upper classes, expressing their attitudes in their writings. As a result, when a Middle Easterner examines his or her "identity" they undergo a discovery of many ingredients *and* images. The first volume of our curriculum guide on the Muslim Middle East examines these ingredients which coalesce to help a Middle Easterner determine his heritage and his choices.

Spotlight on the Muslim Middle East: Issues of Identity, examines the issues of religion, community, ethnicity, nationalism, and gender which combine to form the identity of the Muslim Middle Easterner. In investigating each of the themes, we have tried to accomplish the following: (a) multiple voices; (b) multiple perspectives; (c) multiple scenarios; (d) a sympathetic reading of the region and its inhabitants; (e) a deeper and more concerned approach to the study of the Middle East. We want to share with the readers our ongoing struggle to select materials which are challenging and appropriate. We found this region to be both fascinating and frustrating, like all the other regions we must scrutinize to understand our complex world. The student readings range from simple to more difficult but are intellectually and conceptually challenging. These readings will assist the students to see the many components which together help form a person's identity.

Although we are primarily interested in providing materials for the social studies classroom, the readings we have selected are integrated in approach. The use of literature and poetry—including interviews, portraits, memoirs and stories—is vital in understanding the "voice" of a people. Each of the chapters contain material which might not normally be used in the social studies classroom, but contain elements we consider fundamental to an understanding of a region.

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The three introductory essays will explain in detail the beliefs which have motivated our work. Professor Lila Abu-Lughod, Department of Anthropology, New York University, sets the frame of reference for the themes of identity. Her cogent essay is an excellent analysis of how we should start thinking about identity. The question of specific Muslim identity is appraised in the second scholarly essay contributed by Professor Frank Peters, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature, New York University. The final essay on identity in the literary context, presented by Professor Mona Mikhail, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature, New York University, brings us concrete references to the issue of identity in the literary output of the region. Each of these scholars has been outstanding in providing materials and viewpoints which are interesting and provocative for the classroom.

The genesis of this project was a conversation with Dr. Jill Claster, Director of the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University. We agreed that a collaboration was needed between pre-collegiate and university educators to update and uplift the materials for the classroom. Funding was made available for a two-year curriculum development program through Title VI of the United States Department of Education. At this point, we have begun work on volume two and we hope it will be as exciting as this piece.

I want to thank everyone who has worked closely with us on this project. Both Dr. Claster and Professor Timothy Mitchell, Acting Director of the Center during Dr. Claster's sabbatical, have worked closely with us to make this project succeed. We have established strong ties with the outstanding professional staff at the Hagop Kevorkian Center, the Title VI Middle East Outreach Center and with the graduate assistants who have all contributed to this curriculum. Brian Kelahan, has been particularly involved, working with us to coordinate outreach efforts as part of a professional development program and carefully reading and editing each selection.

For a list of videotapes corresponding to each section of this curriculum, contact The Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at 212-998-8872, or write the Center at New York University, 50 Washington Square South, New York, NY 10012-1073. Videos are available free of charge to teachers in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Special thanks, of course, goes to the staff of The American Forum. Elizabeth Mahony, my colleague and Curriculum Development Associate—for her dedicated, thoughtful, and invaluable work. Corina Udrea assisted as an intern, doing the bulk of the work on obtaining copyright permissions. Elisabeth Valand deserves much thanks for production support and cover design.

It is the goal of The American Forum to provide timely and relevant regional and area studies curriculum as well as stressing significant issues in global education. We are interested in furthering the cause of world cooperation and understanding and our mission remains to emphasize secondary education, support the use of a variety of approaches to teaching, and strengthen the field of global education.

Thinking About Identity

Professor Lila Abu-Lughod, Department of Anthropology, New York University

Contemporary U.S. media images, fueled by the self-presentations of some vocal groups in the Middle East, encourage us to think of people in the Middle East primarily in terms of their identities as Muslims (adherents of the religion of Islam). But this is misleading. Not only is the Middle East composed of people following the three major world religions that originated there, but people in the region, like people everywhere, define themselves in multiple ways, often depending on the context.

For people living in the predominantly Muslim Middle East, just as in the multicultural but predominantly Christian United States, one's religious identity is only one aspect of who one is. In the United States, whether you are a Christian, Muslim, Jew or Hindu may define where and how you worship; it does not define if you actually do worship, or do so regularly or fervently. It may define some of what you believe about divinity, morality, and the afterlife; but it has little to do with how rich you are, what you do all day, what music you listen to, which locker room you use, what political party you vote for, or what other countries interest you.

The concept of "identity" is a useful starting point for cross-cultural understandings of human experience because it begins with the individual. Thinking about personal identity means asking how people define or think about themselves. This will always be related to how others define them and what options are open to them. These options have been shaped by local and global history and politics. Thus, asking about identities allows us to see the impact on individual lives of the broader forces of history and global politics--the subjects of the standard curriculum.

The questions of identity are: Who am I? Where do I belong? Who are my people? Although many things go into forming any individual's personal identity, in the Middle East it is helpful to think about the intersections of five major factors: (1) religion; (2) nationalism; (3) ethnicity; (4) mode of livelihood; and (5) gender and family. The readings in this module are organized around these themes.

The most important general point to remember is that identities are not primordial. They are not natural, permanent, or fixed although people themselves often feel that they are. There are three crucial dynamics of identity formation that this essay will explore: (1) Identity is always defined through difference from something else; (2) The aspects of identity that are most relevant or salient depend on the context; (3) Identities can be, and constantly are being, given new meanings and mobilized for political purposes.

> (1) **Identity and Difference**: That identity is defined by difference is obvious when you think about it. A person in the United States might think: I am an American—not a Russian. I am a New Englander—not a Southerner. I am an African-American—not a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Similarly, a person in the Middle East might think: I am a Christian—not a Muslim. I am a Maronite Christian—not a Protestant. I am an Egyptian—not a Palestinian. I am an Arab—not a Turk. I am a farmer—not a city lawyer. I am a woman—not a man.
>
> (2) **Identity and Context**: All people have multiple identities. The identity that will be most salient or relevant will depend on the context. If I am thinking about what jobs are open to me, or what time of the day I'd feel comfortable walking in the city, I am thinking of myself as a woman. If my grandfather dies, I feel grief with my whole family, including men like my father, my brothers, and my cousins. If I pack up the car and go for a picnic in the countryside, I feel how urban I am when I see someone riding by on his donkey carrying a load of clover. If I'm fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, I am keenly aware of being a Muslim, like millions like me who are fasting around the world. But if my country competes in the World Cup Soccer Match or goes to war with a neighboring country, it is my national identity as a Moroccan, a Kuwaiti, or an Iranian that determines for whom I cheer or weep.

(3) **Identity, Politics and History**: Finally, what it actually means to belong to one category or another and how such senses of belonging shape individuals' relationships to others around them--whether next door or across the world—are open to tremendous change. Examples can be given for each of the five major factors shaping identity.

Gender may seem like the most natural identity. Yet to be a man or woman in the Muslim Middle East meant different things for people in the 19th century than it does for those in the 20th century. It means different things for the Turkish women whose "emancipation" was a government project since the 1920s and Algerian women who needed to use their veils to maintain their cultural identity and hide their guerrilla activities in the struggle against French colonial control of their country. Gender also has different implications for an educated woman from an elite family who is worried whether she will win her seat in Parliament and a rural mother of six children who is worried about keeping her water buffalo fed, her chickens healthy, and her children's school fees paid.

Similarly, religious traditions may seem ancient and religious identities fundamental. Yet a closer look reveals that such identities are open to change, and even manipulation. The writer of an Egyptian television serial attacking fundamentalism recently explained his position as follows: Egyptians had always been a religious people in their everyday lives but demanding that the state and laws should be Islamic, using violence to change the government, and fostering hatred for Christians, as Islamic militants were doing, was both new and wrong. To be a Muslim in a world like that of the Arab traveler Ibn Battuta, who spent years traversing a powerful and extensive Islamic world that covered the Middle East, Spain, parts of Africa, and large portions of Asia, while Europe was only beginning to emerge from its "Dark Ages" was very different from being a Muslim in the mid-20th century when a few European countries had gained political and economic control over most of the areas where Muslims lived.

The case of the Jewish community of Jerba (an island off the Tunisian coast) is particularly revealing about the changing meaning of religious identity. Udovitch and Valensi (1984) document the striking similarities between this Jewish community and the Muslim neighbors with whom they had co-existed since at least the Middle Ages. Although the two groups made a point of distinguishing between themselves, the similarities in dress, everyday customs, and ideas about gender were more obvious. The status of the Jerban Jews changed fundamentally when the modern Tunisian state was established. From being one community among many, they became a "minority" within a dominant national tradition. This increased friction between the Jews and led to a hardening of a sense of difference. With the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, the communities became polarized as each identified, or was identified, with different nation-states in the region. In short, the meaning of their religious identities changed with the wider political transformations in the region, especially the formation of modern nation-states.

Historically speaking, national identities are relatively recent forms of identity. In Europe, it was the 19th century that saw the rise of nationalism and the division into the countries we now think of (if they would not fall apart as they have in Eastern Europe and the Balkans) as units. In the Arab Middle East, nationalism arose in the context of 20th century European colonial control and was crucial, as in the United States in the 18th century, in struggles for independence. In Iran and Turkey, former centers of empires that were never directly controlled by outsiders, the broader context of knowledge of nationalism and the European threat spurred the formation of modern nation-states.

Despite the relatively recent divisions into the bounded nation-states we now see on the map, and the drawing of the boundaries in sometimes arbitrary ways by the colonial powers who had shared interests in the region, the sentiments of national belonging run deep. These sentiments may be cross-cut by other loyalties and identities--based on language, religion, or common histories—but they do constitute crucial aspects of personal identity. As with the Palestinians, who are still struggling for their nation-state, the sentiments of nationalism and longing for homeland have inspired some of the most moving poetry and other forms of popular artistic production. Passports, frontiers, constitutions, governments, economies and ideas about citizenship and rights have fundamentally altered the character of personal identity and the meaning of other aspects of identity, such as religion or language.

The relevance of ethnicity for people's identities in the Middle East is the most difficult to determine since the meaning of the term "ethnicity" is itself far from clear. It is a term popularized by American scholars of the 1950s as a way of marking differences between social groups. It was a replacement for the term "race," which was used in previous eras to define the differences among immigrants in the U.S. and the identities of nations in Europe. Yet how the term defines the differences among groups is variable. To transfer it to the Middle East creates even more confusion.

In that region, the pseudo-scientific biological notions of race that were so crucial to 19th century European nationalism and colonialism were never mobilized. Nor can we talk about ethnicity, as in the American context, in terms of countries of origin. Instead, the term ethnicity will be used to refer simply to cultural identities that are not isomorphic with the national. Some would consider language to be an important marker of ethnicity. Arabic speakers, speakers of Turkic languages, and Persian speakers would then be considered different ethnic groups. On certain occasions, this is indeed for individuals a relevant aspect of identity and alliance. More commonly, the term has been used to label minorities--religious, cultural, or linguistic. But as we saw above in the case of the Jerban Jews, the status and meaning of being a minority shifts with the birth of nation-states. It is interesting that communities like the Kurds or the Armenians who share a sense of peoplehood, a history of oppression, and a language but were not given a state of their own are now labeled ethnic groups. They see themselves as nations without a country. Others, like the Copts (Christians) of Egypt who are a numerical minority, recently objected to being labeled a "minority" (ethnic group) by scholars because they feel they are authentic Egyptians and Egyptians first.

The final aspect of identity that this module explores is based on one of the most ancient divisions in the Middle East: between the rural and the urban. As in the United States, people across the Middle East make their living in numerous ways. Yet there are longstanding differences between those who have lived in the cities and worked in specialized occupations and those who lived in the countryside. In rural areas in the Middle East, even if there was some movement back and forth, the sense that farmers and herders were deeply different was also widely shared. The rhythms of life, the concerns, and the senses of self varied accordingly.

Yet even these aspects of identity are open to historical change and political mobilization. Herders such as the semi-nomadic Bedouin Arabs have often prided themselves on their sense of genealogy and their freedom; they have looked down on peasants. In places like Jordan where Bedouin formed the new nation's military, they have been able to maintain this pride. In other countries like Egypt where they are now tiny minorities, they are denigrated and considered bandits or forced into other ways of life as their pasture land is taken. Peasants are often depicted by city people as country bumpkins and have sometimes suffered at the hands not just of nomads but of armies and tax collectors emanating from the urban centers of power. Yet peasants have recently been glorified by Palestinian nationalists as key symbols of attachment to the land. And farmers themselves have looked to the city with ambivalence. It is a source of goods and perhaps work, as millions of migrants hope. It may represent modernity or civilization. But it is also may be seen as the place of corrupt values and social mores. Yet as cities expand into rural areas and rural towns and villages become more populated, and as television brings the same images to whole nations, the urban-rural distinction, and the ways it shaped individual identities, is changing once again.

Muhammad, the Qur'an and Muslim Identity

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All conversion is a change in identity, and in many religious communities such a momentous change in life is signaled by a change in name: Abram becomes Abraham, Shaul becomes Paul, and Cassius Clay is converted into Muhammad Ali. When Muhammad began his preaching in Mecca early in the seventh century, he was, by his own lights, the only *muslim*, one who had "submitted" to God. Hence his primary task was conversion, to persuade his fellow Meccans to examine their lives in the light of an inevitably approaching divine judgment and to take up a new one. The identity of the Muslim convert is rapidly sketched out in the early *surahs* (chapters) of the Qur'an, later to be filled in with the denser detail of the surahs delivered at Medina to an audience of those who had already converted. The new Muslim must cease from unbelief, that is, leave off venerating any other god save Allah, the God. The Muslim must now also practice daily liturgical prayer and contribute alms for the support of the poor and needy. These are external acts that might distinguish the Muslim from his Meccan contemporaries—"To you your religion, and to me my religion," the Qur'an abruptly announces to the pagans—but those who submitted were stamped with a new internal identity as well: they should be marked with a fear of God's justice and a trust in God's mercy.

The earliest Meccan "submitters" did not, in the manner of the earliest Christians, "leave father and mother and all else besides," to join Muhammad in a closed community of believers; though they were followers of the Prophet, they continued to live in their own homes, with their own frequently unsympathetic families. Many of Muhammad's own family, his sons-in-law, for example, and even his own guardian and the father of 'Ali, one of his principal followers, died as they had lived, as pagans. The real break-out of a Muslim community occurred when Muhammad was forced, under threats to his life and those of his followers, to migrate to the oasis settlement of Medina, some 275 miles to the north of Mecca. Those Muslims who accompanied him, "the Migrants," as later generations called them, constituted the first genuine Muslim community in a social rather than a religious sense. But there were believers at Medina as well, "the Helpers," as they came to be called, and the two groups, Meccan "Migrants" and Medinese "Helpers," were quickly and necessarily welded into a single unit. "The Brotherhood" it was dubbed by Muhammad, a reference to their economic and social union rather than their fellowship in Islam. It was not a perfect meld, however: identity as a "Migrant" or a "Helper" continued for the better part of a generation to determine status and preferment in the Muslim community.

When Muhammad first arrived in Medina, where he had been invited in the hope that his charismatic presence might help solve the social strife in the oasis, he concluded a contract with all of the Medinese, Muslims, Jews and pagans, that they would henceforth constitute one mutually responsible community (*umma*), of which he (and God) was the unquestioned head. This first hybrid community did not long survive, however. The rapid conversion of the pagan Medinese and the Jews' steadfast refusal to acknowledge Muhammad's prophetic mission induced an unbearable tension. The Jews were forced to yield, not to conversion but to exile or death. Before the end of Muhammad's life the umma thus became an exclusive religious community, the commonwealth of all believers, and, under Muhammad's leadership and the force of Muslim arms, an enormously dynamic polity as well.

Arabia had not seen its like before. There were Christians and Jews in the peninsula, but they were politically and socially organized, like all the Arabs, into *tribes*. Mecca was a kinship society organized in ascending units of families, clans and tribes, and though the urban environment and the feverish capitalism of the town may have been eroding those ties, they still prevailed in the society into which Muhammad was born. The effects of Islam on this arrangement first became apparent after the migration (*hijra*) of Muhammad's followers to Medina. The artificial and sometimes disruptive insertion of the "Migrants" into Medinese tribal society was the first sign that a new order was coming into being, and how powerful would be its effects was revealed in the subsequent clashes between the Quraysh, the paramount tribe of Mecca, and the Muslims at Medina. Father fought and killed, or was killed by, son, brother by brother, cousin by cousin. This had never previously occurred in a society where kinship solidarity took precedence over all other allegiances. To replace kinship society Muhammad had created a new model, the umma, the collectivity of all Muslims, where a shared faith prevailed over common blood, where "the way of the ancestors," the moral map of a tribal society, was replaced by "the way of the Prophet." This latter, taken with the Qur'an, now provided the ethical code of the new Muslim community.

Muhammad's efforts to construct a society based solely on a community of faith was not a complete success. Apart from the fact that the new community was underinstitutionalized—the Qur'an, with its finely tuned individual and family ethic, provides almost no guidance on group governance or relations, and the unique example of the charismatic Prophet-statesman had little or no transfer value to his astute but decidedly un-Prophetic successors-the practice of millennia did not simply disappear. Faith may have been stronger than blood, but it did not dissolve it. Not until the Muslims became immersed and integrated into the far more urban and open agricultural societies of the Middle East did tribal identities wither, and, if they never entirely disappeared, they yielded to other, broader categories of identification.

One such identity marker was the result of Muhammad's own message, albeit never particularly stressed during his lifetime. There is no strong evidence that what we so easily call "Arabs," had any strong sense of themselves as a species of ethnic super-tribe in pre-Islamic Arabia. The self-identification of Muhammad's contemporaries generally rose only through family and clan to the tribal level; beyond that there was little sense of a "race" or a "nation." On the few occasions when the Qur'an refers to "Arabs" the word is employed in one of its generally accepted meanings, the bedouin—Muhammad was not a great admirer of theirs—as opposed to town dwellers like the Prophet and his followers. But Muhammad also used the derived adjective "Arabic" in the same sense as we do in English. What he was pronouncing was "a clear Arabic Qur'an. "We have never sent a messenger," God is reported as saying (Surah 14: 4), "except in the tongue of his people." Another verse (42: 5) seems to limit Muhammad's "people" to those dwelling in Mecca and its vicinity, but in the Prophet's own lifetime the élan and conviction of Muslim arms had already carried Muhammad's message far beyond the boundaries of his immediate environment toward the larger audience of Arabs living all around the borders of the Fertile Crescent.

The fact of the Arabic Qur'an, the theological doctrine that it expressed the will of God in the *very words of God*, and its corollary that it thus represented the perfection of all utterance, all put an indelible Arab stamp on the fabric of Islam. Tribalism may have been bubbling just beneath the surface of the new community, but for the other peoples of the Middle East, Jews, Copts of Egypt, Arameans of SyriaPalestine and Mesopotamia, and Iranians of the high plateau and the Tigris-Euphrates bottom lands, the rich ethnic pool out of which the umma drew its new converts, Islam was an Arab phenomenon: it possessed an Arab Prophet, an Arabic Scripture, and it was being spread abroad by armies that were, in the first instance at least, composed entirely of Arab mounted troops. To join the new ruling elite, whether for genuinely religious motives or for opportunistic social and political gain, it was necessary to become not only Islamicized but Arabized as well.

Not everyone was pleased with the cultural conversion that seemed perforce to accompany the religious one. Many of the new converts belonged to ancient and esteemed cultural traditions of their own, and a new Iranian Muslim, for example, might well have ground for despising the parvenu Arabs who called a religious tune that had unmistakable, and unmistakably Arab, undertones. The resentment grew in the ninth century into a movement of cultural nationalism that attempted to reassert the cultural values of other ethnic societies, while still remaining faithful to the religious vision of Islam. In a sense the movement was successful: there eventually emerged a new literary and artistic growth from the convert-cultures, notably the Persian and the Turkish, then later in India and Africa. But in other instances, that of the Arameans and Copts, for example, the Arabism of Islam overwhelmed and eventually fossilized them, and in the cases of the Persians, Turks and others, Arabic script was used to provide new letters for old tongues—Turkey opted for Latin over Arabic script in the 20s—and the convert-languages were swamped with innumerable Arabic loan words. More, their religious virtuosos had to become in effect bi-lingual, as they remain today: no matter what the culture, the primary religious discourse in Islam continued to be conducted in Arabic until relatively recent times, and even the humblest convert is encouraged to read the Qur'an in God's sacred tongue, Arabic.

Identity and The Literary Context

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Since the end of the 19th century, most profound and radical changes have come about in all aspects of life in the Middle East. The Arab literary renaissance that began over a hundred years ago which was part of the general Arab awakening that was affecting various aspects of national life is possibly the most momentous of these changes. The search for a new identity in the true sense of the word was set in motion and still seems to be the underlying principle of a quest, attempting to find the Arab's rightful place in the modern world.

Arabic poetry, long revered as the greatest of the Arab arts, underwent seismic changes in both form and content paralleling in many ways that search for a new political identity. Part of this awakening came from a confrontation with the West. The Arabic language began undergoing great changes which ultimately rendered it more flexible for modern use, while still remaining the most powerful unifying element of the Arab ethos. The search for a new interpretation of this identity led to an eagerness to learn from the "other" on the one hand, and to resistance to many of the acquired values. Ultimately they produced a literature that absorbed internal conflicts and was better able to express their modern human condition.

This stage was followed by cultural, social, political and economic changes ushered in by the accession to independence and the shaking off of foreign rule which by mid-twentieth century opened the gates to a remarkable number of voices: poets, short story writers, novelists, dramatists and theorists and critics.

An Arab bourgeois class had emerged after the two World wars, and had succeeded in shaking the feudal economic structure. Growing numbers of women began to join the work force and find their legitimate place in the classroom. It is to the Arab women writers that we will turn to later to try and trace the road map to these new identities. The anguish of transition and the hope for a new vision for the future is best discovered in these writings.

With the end of World War II, the Middle East finds itself even more alienated from the West, while paradoxically its literature and thought were increasingly feeling the impact of Western models. New movements were evident in all of the arts encompassing the visual arts (painting and sculpture as well as the cinema) but especially in poetry, fiction and criticism. The young generations were not only experiencing shock and bitterness over such questions as the loss of Palestine, and Western interests becoming more entrenched in their midst, they inevitably were compelled to "express" them in a new way. The language had to be more immediate, less confined by form. Arabic poetry thus became new in its form revolutionizing the time honored norms of over thirteen hundred years.

Meanwhile in Beirut, Cairo and Baghdad there raged a battle of words, between the old guard and the defiant young rebels in search of their new identity. Arabs and Middle Easterners in general are basically traditionalists and hence the resistance to innovations was initially quite fierce. The new "free" verse movement eventually prevailed and came to dominate the literary scene.

In the early 1950's, Anglo Saxon influences began to replace the time honored French, Italian and Russian earlier presence. T.S. Eliot is the towering figure who seemed to best articulate the hopes, desires and aspirations of that new revolutionary generation of poets. Tradition and individual talent as well as *The Wasteland* reverberated loudly with Arab poets and showed them the possibility of co-existence between the old and the new. The old could influence the new and the new could readjust the parameters of the old. Technically *The Wasteland* of Eliot opened new vistas to unexplored possibilities which resulted in some of the most memorable Arabic poetry of this century. Arab poets came to understand the message of hope inherent in *The Wasteland*. Sacrifice and love will bring fertility to the thirsting arid land. Christ, the Cross (symbols of rebirth and rejuvenation and salvation) and Tammuz (symbols of the ancient Babylonian and Sumerian god, gods who were both pre-Islamic and pre-Christian) are new symbols that become prevalent in with poets from Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon in the poetry of Al-Sayyab, Abd al Sabur, Adonis, and Hawi amongst others.

The immediate success of the Egyptian 1952 Revolution which ousted the monarchy, and the British symbols of oppression, and the rise of Nasserism was a strong impetus for a new Arab identity, a new sense of Nationalism. A mood of euphoria and optimism of social justice and humanism fueled this newly found self confidence. New art forms came to the forefront such as a modern Moroccan and Egyptian theater. It translated itself into a search for an authentic self, an autonomy inspired by time revered Islamic values.

It is to fiction that we should turn to try and understand what identity really means to the different segments of society. For instance Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi's novel *al-Ard* (Translated as the Egyptian *Earth*) addresses a crucial aspect of Egyptian history when it was undergoing a phase of search for its national identity. Here issues of class and gender are explored. The "authentic" *fellah* (peasant) is juxtaposed to the corrupt, exploitative feudal rulers as well as to the persecuting colonialists. The cultural and class gap is poignantly underscored to highlight the authenticity of the nation. The fellah is the true heir to the land and its legitimate son, while the feudal lords are peripherally linked to it by virtue of their birthright to own, buy and sell it. In such narratives we can also witness the dichotomy between rural and urban realities. Yet it is not a clear cut division of good and evil, for the metropolis, in this case Cairo can also be a bastion of resistance at least to the foreign oppressor, in this case the British colonialist.

At the other end of the spectrum we come across novels where a different kind of protagonist is in search of his identity often on foreign soil. *The Latin Quarter* is a novel by the Lebanese writer Suhayl Idris, where he describes his experience as a student in Paris after World War II. In it he explores the relationship between Arab male students and French women. He focusses on the tormented and sexually deprived students confronting an alien society with radically different values. *The Latin Quarter* is a space to explore the inherent hypocrisy of some Arab societies and the detrimental repression of its women's sexuality, however this fictional narrative also becomes a means to explore ways of shaking away the suffocating grip of traditions. It is also a stage along the road to maturity and the assumption of political responsibility which could ultimately promote the Arab nationalist ideal.

Within this literary context, personal identity can be explored in conjunction with communal identity. The self-invented modern man acts alone. Reality is in large part experienced through the mediation of culture's interdictory dictates. In novels like *Seasons of Migration to the North* by the Sudanese Al-Tayib Saleh or *Seeds of Corruption* by the Egyptian Sabri Moussa, their heroes seek to circumvent as much of the destructive sides of modernity as possible. In the works of these authors as well as many others within the Middle East we note the urgent need to reexamine the role of tradition in society.

The novels here succeed in moving away from a subjective interiroity to express communal themes through the successful use of well known literary techniques as the stream of consciousness and a collective historical consciousness.

The epoch-making trilogy of Naguib Mahfouz, the only Arab Nobel laureate to date, translated as *Palace Walk, Palace of Desire* and *Sugar Street*, is unmatched in its capacity of representing this collective historical consciousness of a whole nation, voiced by the members of a Cairene bourgeois family dominated by the declining figure of its tyrannical patriarch Ahmad abd al-Jawad. The trilogy resurrects Cairo between 1917 and 1944, a crucial period in the history of Egypt, which witnessed the rise of Arab nationalism. More importantly it was a critical period in the transformation of a society passing brutally from a phase of relative innocence to violent confrontation with a growing but disconcerting modernity.

Ever since the turn of the century Arab women were seriously engaged in making their voices heard. Quite understandably it was women of middle and upper-middle classes who, having the good fortune of receiving at least a primary education, set upon the difficult task of expressing themselves within the confines of a restrictive society. Sometimes they borrowed the language of the colonizer as in the case of Out al Koulob al-Demardashiyya who wrote her novel/memoir in French. *Ramza* has been recently rendered in English. The rebellion of a woman against life in the harem at the turn of the century has many nuances to it. Women are shown making the best of a situation by working to ensure that some limited power still remains in their hands.

Fifty years later women novelists proclaim loudly women's need to liberate themselves from the tyranny of the male and the constraints of society. The novels and short stories of Layla Baalbaki, Emily Nasrallh, Alifa Rifaat, and Daisy al-Amir among many others move beyond the stage of portraying young women in rebellion and in pursuit of total freedom to major themes such as the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese civil war.

The North African literature written in French often referred to as Maghrebin literature poses a whole different problematic when we explore yet other sides of this quest for identity. The complexity of this quest is compounded by the widespread use of the voice of the "other" i.e. the French language, although of course there is a growing body of literature written in Arabic which is quickly acquiring a central place within Arabic literature as a whole.

Throughout that literary quest for a new identity we note that authenticity is not a fixed point in the past to which Arabs must hark back in order to establish this long sought after state of being. It is rather a constant urge and capacity for movement to go beyond the existing limits towards perhaps an ideal world which, while assimilating the past, looks ahead for a brighter future.

Teaching Methodology

What we teach in the classroom is our single most important task. Content material must be timely, accurate, provocative, challenging, multicultural and multidisciplinary, and exciting. However, the content cannot be totally effective without innovative methodology.

We have grown to understand a good deal about the learning process over the last 25 years. In the "factory model" classroom, the students were required to sit quietly and absorb what the teacher was saying. The lecture format was standard and, unfortunately, continues to be used in some classrooms today. But we know that the "chalk and talk" format is not truly successful. We need to draw upon all the known and unknown resources the students bring to the classroom; we need to move the students from the known to the unknown, expanding their knowledge base and their curiosity as we progress. Getting students involved in the process of learning is crucial in today's environment.

However, there has been the veritable information explosion and teachers can no longer be considered the primary dispensers of information. The teacher cannot know everything, nor can the teacher be expected to instruct the student in how they can "think through" the material and apply it to their lives. The teacher can only serve as a facilitator, a mentor, a model from which the students can process the material. The teacher, like his students, is also the student.

In this curriculum guide, we have made an important decision. Rather than develop detailed lesson plans which provide step-by-step procedures for the students and the teachers, we have decided to provide an array of broad stroke methodologies. In other words, we are including an introductory section which cites several classroom strategies which we endorse and have found to be successful. In each of the sections, as we provide additional information on the readings, we will suggest possible classroom strategies. However, we are leaving the final decision to the classroom teacher. The strategy the teacher selects will be determined by the length of time for the unit. If the teacher is able to devote three weeks to the issue of identity, multiple cooperative learning and jigsaw lessons can be developed. If, on the other hand, the unit needs to be completed in five lessons, the teacher may select some strategies which are shorter. We subscribe to any student involvement strategies. In the long run, the classroom teacher knows the culture of his school and his classroom better than anyone else and should determine the appropriate classroom activities.

We hope you will find this teacher methodology guide adaptable and valuable. The guide, a compilation of classroom strategies and activities, includes:

(A) TAPPING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE
    semantic mapping, anticipation guides, "What I Know" charts
(B) VOCABULARY STRATEGIES
    acquisition, CLOZE, building vocabulary and conceptual knowledge
(C) WRITING STRATEGIES
    frames, essays, learning logs, and double-entry journals
(D) REVIEW STRATEGIES
    organizers
(E) INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES
    cooperative learning

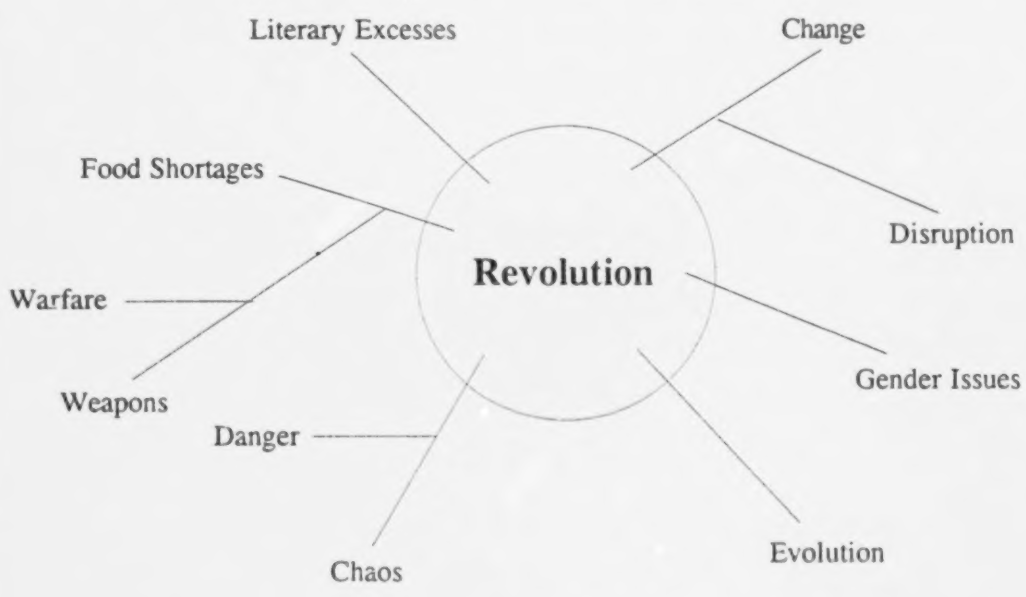
A. TAPPING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE SKILLS STRATEGIES

a. Semantic Mapping

This activity provides the teacher with a quick assessment of the students' background knowledge. It is also an excellent framework for introducing new vocabulary and concepts. From the students' point of view, the activity helps them to recall their prior knowledge and encourages them to share that with other students.

- Students are given a word, a phrase, or a concept.
- They are asked to think silently for a minute or two, jotting down any ideas or thoughts that come to mind.
- The activity is then opened to the class, and the students are asked to "brainstorm" their thoughts with fellow students.
- A map or web of ideas is developed which may be sequenced, prioritized or grouped.
- A summary activity would require the students to add new information to the map to create a written paragraph.

Sample Semantic Map


Literary Excesses
Change
Food Shortages
Disruption
Revolution
Warfare
Gender Issues
Weapons
Danger
Evolution
Chaos

b. Anticipation Guides

An anticipation guide consists of a series of statements about the content which is to be taught. This strategy is useful in helping the teacher learn how much of the reading the student understood, what prior knowledge the student had and how this knowledge can be drawn upon on other levels. For the student, it teaches reading with curiosity and reinforces their learning through the writing process.

- At the beginning of the lesson, students are asked to complete Column A of the guide by checking whether they agree or disagree with the statements.
- Then they may work in pairs or groups to group ideas that have something in common so that they can predict what the selection will be about.
- Next they read the selection and revise their opinions based on the information they read. This information should be written in column B of the guide.

Statements are used rather than questions because students simply respond to the information. They don't have to generate information as they do when a question is asked. As students read, if their opinions are correct, they experience the "Aha!" of being right.

Sample Anticipation Guide

Part A: Before you read the selection, see how well you can **predict** or **anticipate** what you are going to learn. Base your prediction upon what you already know about the condition of women in the Muslim Middle East. In Column A, place a check next to each statement you believe will be proven true when you read about Om Gad.

A B
__ __ 1. Most Egyptian women, like Om Gad, have had many children.
__ __ 2. Most of Om Gad's children survived childhood.
__ __ 3. Although she was born in the country, Om Gad's life is easier in the city.

Part B: After reading about Om Gad, put in check in Column B next to all the statements you believe are true. How much did the reading about Om Gad improve your understanding?

Part C: Rewrite each incorrect sentence to make it correct with the story.

Questions
- In your experience, what helped you make that prediction?
- What else do you know about women in the Middle East?
- What connection is there between women in this area of the world and women in other areas of the world? Are their conditions the same? Different?
- What other readings have you found that deal with the same problem as Om Gad?

c. "What I Know" Chart

This is a versatile strategy which may be used to help students tap into their prior knowledge of a topic or of a concept. This chart enables students to think and to write about what they already know, what they have learned (from the day's lesson or from an assigned reading), and what they need to know in order to facilitate a complete understanding of the lesson or reading.

How to Use the "What I Know" Chart

- Distribute the chart. At the top, write a key question.
- Have students brainstorm all they know about the topic. They write the information in Column I, What I Know.
- Pair students. Tell them to share all they know. Add new information to column I, What I Know.
- As students are doing this, the teacher should circulate and ask generic questions which encourage students to be more specific, point them in other directions.
- Tell them to place a dot (○) in front of everything about which they are sure.
- Next, tell them to generate a question for every item about which they are not sure. Categorize questions. This may be done in groups, pairs, or individually.
- Write ALL the questions that have been generated on the blackboard.
- Direct the students to begin reading about the topic or to begin listening for answers to the questions as the lesson develops.
- As students read or listen, they should answer as many of their questions as they can. These answers are placed under *What I Now Know*.
- Discuss answers and identify what puzzles students or what they are curious about. Identify what original questions remain unanswered. Write these questions under *What I Need/Want to Know*. Answers to these questions can be researched.
- Then, and this is very important, ask, "What did you learn that you did not have questions for?" This information can be added under *What I Now Know*.
- Finally, provide the students with time to answer the key question.

Question: ______________________________

What I Know Chart

What I Know	What I Now Know	What I Need/Want to Know
		Answer to Question: ____________________ ____________________ ____________________ ____________________ ____________________

B. VOCABULARY STRATEGIES

a. Vocabulary Acquisition

Our students need to acquire a "social studies" vocabulary— language intrinsic (key) to the subject matter such as imperialism, democracy, etc. At the same time they must expand their vocabulary to include generic (core) languages - e.g. benefits, visuals, etc. The teacher can assist them by creating *dual glossaries*:

Key words are words which relate directly to social studies material and which are intrinsic to the content. Some examples of Key words include: imperialism, nationalism, feudalism, topography, scale, Lutheranism, etc. Core words are words that are generic to the language and not necessarily content specific. Examples of core worlds include: advantages, monarch, judicial, visuals, etc.

One strategy for vocabulary acquisition is to create a chart with headings: Words, General Class (key of core), Definition, Extra Information. As new words are added to the students vocabulary, they complete the chart and create sentences using both key and core words. With this "testing" mechanism the student will have immediate use of the language and feel more comfortable.

b. Using Cloze for Concept and Vocabulary Development

Cloze involves the application of the psychological theory that readers fill in, complete or "cloze" gaps in comprehension to give meaning to what they read.

Procedure

- Choose a passage of about 300 words. Leave the first and last sentences intact—no deletions.
- Delete every nth word (or) Delete verbs, nouns, repositions or other part of speech (or) Delete key words. (See Sample passage.)
- Distribute the passage to students. Have them fill in the missing words using the four column guide or give them choices of words that will fit in the blank.
    (1) Student fills in the word he thinks is appropriate in Column I.
    (2) Class is divided into groups of 4. All words selected by group are entered in Column II.
    (3) Group reaches consensus of best word which is entered in Column III.
    (4) Students check their word choices against words of author, found in Column IV.
- Class discussion of word choices and reasons for word choices.

Application

The second line of the *shahada* affirms Muhammad as the final prophet of Islam. God spoke to humans through his concern for people and his desire that they be led properly through the vicissitudes of life. If individuals follow God's commandments, they will be rewarded on Judgment Day. The Qur'an vividly describes the paradise of the believers and the hellfire of the wrongdoers.

God chose prophets to preach his laws to the people. Muhammad emerged as the leader of the Arab community and organized a community of believers...The Qur'an speaks of the *umma*, the community of believers which replaces all other types of community organization. Membership in the umma is based upon belief; all Muslims are equal in the umma whatever their birth, rank, nationality, or wealth.

The second line of the *shahada* affirms Muhammad as the final prophet of Islam. God spoke to humans through his concern for people and his desire that they be led properly through the vicissitudes of life. If individuals follow God's 1.________________, they will be rewarded on Judgment Day. The 2. ________________ vividly describes the paradise of the believers and the hellfire of the wrongdoers.

God chose 3. ________________ to preach his laws to the people. Muhammad emerged as the leader of the Arab community and organized a community of 4.________________...The Qur'an speaks of the *umma*, the community of believers which replaces all other types of community organization. Membership in the 5. ________________ is based upon belief; all Muslims are equal in the umma whatever their birth, rank, nationality, or wealth.

Sample Cloze Chart

Your Choice	Group Choices	Group Consensus	Author word

c. Building Vocabulary and Conceptual Knowledge

(Adapted from *Enhancing Social Studies Through Literary Strategies*; Judith Irvin, John Lunstrum, Carol Lynch-Brown, Mary Shepard; National Council for the Social Studies; Washington, D.C. Bulletin 91, August, 1995)

The vocabulary used in the social studies classroom is often as strange to our students as a foreign language. It is imperative that vocabulary acquisition become a part of our daily classroom learning and that vocabulary become related to ideas or concepts. Recent research have developed some important insights into vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary instruction. These include:

- *What it means to "know" a word*: To "know" a word, understanding must be beyond the superficial level. One method is to develop a "knowledge rating" before the students read the material, this is "reteaching" the vocabulary.

	Know the word	Acquainted with the word	Word is unknown
Haj	____________	____________________	____________
Islam	____________	____________________	____________
hegira	____________	____________________	____________
umma	____________	____________________	____________

- *The role of context in word learning*: Some learning from context occurs but is not very powerful. Nevertheless, it is useful to develop strategies which combine definitional and contextual approaches to vocabulary acquisition.

- *The usefulness of definitions*: Looking up words, by itself, does not lead to improved comprehension. This is only superficial understanding and often forgotten. To learn the word, it must be integrated into the schema of the reader.

- *The size and growth of vocabulary as the student matures*: Reading in content areas often leads to a widely diversified vocabulary but it also leads to vocabulary growth. Special social studies words need to be specifically explored in the classroom.

Simple Guidelines for Instruction: Sometimes the teachers should discuss with the students how they "figured out" the meaning of a word; sometimes the teachers should monitor the students understanding of new vocabulary. It is important to help students become independent word learners through assisting them in learning a variety of methods to acquire word meaning. Then students should use their newly acquired words in multiple ways - through associations, synonyms, in writing, in speaking, in context. This leads to deep processing of the words. The new words must be further developed in future reading and writing assignments so that reinforcement is possible. Teachers can develop three to five new words a week by using the word for five consecutive days and have the students tally the number of times they use the new word.

An Example of Learning Strategies: You are about to use this material for teaching about the Muslim Middle East. There are many new words in these readings as well as the text book. Some of these words are: hadith, shar'ia, Islam, muslim, hegira, haj, Ramadan, Sunni, Shi'I, Qur'an, surah, madresh. Additional words will surface. The teacher will (a) need to determine that some words are more important for student learning than others; (b) take into consideration the extent of the student's prior knowledge. Here are some suggested strategies:

- *List-Group-Label*: (Hilda Taba) In this strategy, the teacher begins by using visuals or any other techniques to generate a list of words from the students. The teacher can also use a brainstorming strategy. Then group the words: mosques, minarets, caravansarie, etc. and label each group: e.g. transportation, food, buildings. After these steps, the teacher should interpret the data by identifying similarities and differences, comparing the date to other time frames and applying the words to new situations.

- *Word Maps*: This is similar to semantic mapping, using a word as the center and developing multiple examples to build a full background picture for the definition of the word.

- *Capsule Vocabulary*: The teacher begins by preparing a "capsule" of words which relate to a particular topic: e.g. emir, bey, sultan, monarch, ruler, crown prince, etc. Students use the capsule words as soon and as often as possible both in speaking and writing.

- *Contextual Redefinition*: The teacher will select words that may be unfamiliar to the students and then presents those words in isolation, asking for a definition from the students. After the students have given their definition, the teacher presents a sentence which illustrates the meaning of the unknown word. This should be a contextually rich sentence. Students try to "guess" the meaning of the new words. Students now turn to the dictionary to verify their guesses. This process assists students in becoming independent word learners through the use of context clues.

- *Assessing Vocabulary*: After introducing new vocabulary, post-reading and writing activities are needed to determine if the students have learned the vocabulary.

C. WRITING STRATEGIES

Writing is a skill. Students can be taught to overcome their fear of writing and to write with a degree of comfort. A good part of teaching students to write is to teach a *process* of writing. It is often important to model and demonstrate for the class and then allow the students time to practice. Sometimes it is really necessary to make writing a "step-by-step" experience. Once the students acquire skills, they will be less reluctant to deal with writing in the classroom and on examinations. In order for students to develop writing proficiency, it is vital to have a writing component as part of every lesson. Sometimes the writing may only take three or four minutes and involve the students in writing a question or summarizing a paragraph. At other times, the writing can be a full period activity and students can edit each others work in dyads or groups. There are endless possibilities for introducing writing into each lesson.

a. Writing Frames

This activity can either expand on a unit theme and/or summarize information. For the student, the frame helps the inexperienced writer because it provides a format for written expression. Students who are unable to begin their writing piece can more easily overcome "writer's block." There are many different types of frames the teacher may devise for the student. In developing a frame, the teacher may write the first sentence of every paragraph or present the students with an outline and assist them in "framing" the outline into sentences and paragraphs. The writing frame sets a model for what the writing piece should look like. Modeling is an essential teaching strategy.

b. Persuasive Essays

This activity helps students sharpen their powers of persuasion by learning what good reasons are; the difference between an example and a reason; the purpose of introductory and concluding paragraphs; paragraph format. Writing skills become integrated into the content area and the students are forced to use the content discussed in the classroom in a writing format. This moves the learning process and allows students to further integrate what they are learning into what they have learned. Students learn that writing helps them organize their thoughts and that "writing is thinking; writing is learning."

c. Learning Logs

We suggest that students receive a Learning Log every day, completing it in class or for homework. The Learning Log provides a framework for summarizing the day's work, placing responsibility on both the learner and the teacher. For the student, the log cements the day's learning, clarifies questions that may still remain and makes student responsibility an integral part of the learning process. It models the process that good learners use. The student is forced to think about what he/she learned, did not understand and would like to know more about. The teacher should review the logs for feedback as to how well the students have learned the material, what information must be clarified, and what additional information would be of interest to the students.

Learning Log Form

Directions: At the end of the lesson each day it is important to think about what you have learned. This activity will help you remember the day's learning while it is still fresh in your mind.

1. Today's lesson was about ____

2. I learned that ____

I also learned ____

3. One thing I do not understand is ____

Another thing that confuses me is ____

4. I want to know ____

Name ____

Class ______________________________ Date ______________

d. Journals

Journals are versatile learning tools. They tell teachers how individual students are progressing, what needs clarification, and what is understood. Journal writing requires students to process the learning of the lesson immediately, to acquire ownership of the information, to capture "fresh" insights, and to speak directly to the teacher.

An easy way to introduce either type of journal is by modeling. Compose a sample journal entry on the blackboard or on an overhead transparency. Share your thinking with the class. Let students *hear you think and make corrections and changes*. Then, let students talk about what they will write before they write their own journal entries.

Journal writing has many uses. It can be assigned to summarize lessons, for homework, as a "Do now" that provides a bridge from the previous day's lesson or as notes for absent students to consult. When the teacher reads the journals, (s)he responds to them as if (s)he were talking to the student. Since journal writing is "free" or spontaneous, and not revised, spelling and grammar do not "count."

Good readers employ a number of strategies to make sense of the material they are reading. Some of these strategies include paraphrasing, asking questions, seeing pictures (visualizing), making predictions and revising them, having feelings, making connections to other things the reader knows and recognizing signal words like, but, however, and, therefore.

Directions: Divide your paper in half by folding it from top to bottom. From the reading, select and copy a few sentences *that interest you.* Write them on the left side of the paper. On the right side, write your ideas about the selections you chose, i.e., your questions or what you think the selection means, what the writer helped you to see, what you think will happen, how you feel about the selection you chose, and what the part you chose reminded you about.

Double Entry Journal Sample

Mahrokh grinned until her eyes were mere slits above her high, puffy cheeks. "If they looked at me," she said, "they would call me a heathen. White scarf," she enumerated, plucking at it, "hair showing in front, hair showing at the sides" (she wore the twisted sidelocks of a married women), and if one wamts to one can even see the braids—here and here."	*Student response: It's amazing how people are judged by their clothes and appearance all over the world. I wonder do women have to style their hair differently to show they are married? Or do they want to? Like wearing an engagement ring, for show. She seems sloppy. Maybe she's angry because of the customs.*
The two Koran teachers were fasting, of course, despite the special hardships of a summer fast: no food or drink, not so much as a drop of water on your tongue, from before sunrise to after sundown. Sarah's grandaughters fasted, even the youngest one, who was barely ten.	*Student Response: I'm confused. Can people really survive that long without eating? Is it unhealthy for a ten-year girl? You wouldn't be able to fast during school—not without having lunch.*

D. REVIEW STRATEGIES

Our students today need "speedy practice." Material must be reviewed frequently during the lesson. Working informally in dyads (pairs) and triads (threes) is a useful method to allow students to review. The teacher should allow the students to share several times throughout the lesson. Students will be more inclined to tell a peer if they do not understand than to make an announcement for the whole class. These quick, small groupings will give the students the opportunity to develop questions which they might not ordinarily ask.

Dyads and triads are also positive and fruitful to start a lesson. Students can be asked to review the most important points of the previous lesson. This can be done either with or without their notes. The more habitual the review procedure within the context of the lesson, the more responsive students will be to utilizing previously covered material.

a. Organizers

Many of our students are unable to organize the material we present in the classroom. In an active classroom, so many things are happening concurrently and students often cannot discern between the important and the trivial. Organizers are useful because they help the student differentiate among the many issues discussed in the classroom. Organizers are useful for students because they are primarily visual. Our students, products of television, videos and movies, are primarily visual. Charts and graphs, as well as cartoons and line drawings are found throughout the guide. The following organizers can be created for the students:

- Grouping and labeling organizers
- Generic organizer using titles and topics
- Flowchart organizer
- Acronym organizer
- Visual organizers: trees, flower garden, maps, rivers of thought, etc.

The teacher may find it necessary to periodically stop to check the students' learning by helping the students organize the material. These organizers should be left on display in the classroom as the students work through the unit. It is a visual record of what has been covered and allows the students to "see" the work they have accomplished. Students should be encouraged to develop their own organizers after models have been introduced to the class.

E. INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

a. Cooperative Learning

All current educational research tells that students learn more, learn better and remember more if they are involved in the learning process. Cooperative learning can be as simple as all the groups reading the same material and responding to questions in their groups, to a "jigsaw" technique where different groups read different materials related to the topic and either respond to the same questions or different questions. In either case, the students are responsible for their own learning.

A "How-to" for teachers follows. It is suggested that the teacher introduce the procedures and techniques of cooperative learning independent of the first cooperative learning lesson. This will allow the students time to review what is expected and resolve procedural issues prior to the lesson.

A "How-To" for Cooperative Learning

- Heterogeneous, not homogenous, grouping is desirable. Try to compose groups with both weak and strong students. When you are beginning cooperative learning, it is suggested that the groups remain permanent until students become more familiar with the mechanics of the strategy. Once cooperative learning becomes a part of the classroom routine, the teacher can rearrange the groups and assemble new groups. Students should be grouped as randomly as possible. Grouping techniques include:

  (a) drawing the same number, symbol, color etc., from a bowl, bag or desk
  (b) "counting-off" students (1-2-3-4; 1-2-3-4)
  (c) distributing written assignments to students and grouping them by assignment

- Make sure that each group has a carefully structured task which will result in a product. Groups may have different readings and the same assignments; they may have the same reading and different assignments. The combinations are determined by the teacher who engineers the lesson.

- The group may or may not select a leader, depending upon the nature of the assignment, the instructions of the teacher and the needs of the group. However, all members of the group must be encouraged to read aloud and participate in the activity. This participation may not occur when groups are first selected. Be patient—peer pressure will bring the recalcitrant student into the group.

- The individual is to be held accountable within the group by members of the group. But there should be group rewards so that everyone in the group "wins" and there are no "losers."

- As the students will be working toward mutual goals, individual as well as interpersonal skills are stressed. Students should be encouraged to join their group and start work promptly. Groups should assemble as they enter the room and get "on task" immediately.

- Students in the group should be encouraged to share resources, materials and ideas—discussing vocabulary questions, concepts or comprehension. Discussion should be encouraged among the group members and the teacher should learn to live in a classroom where there is some noise.

- Try to create some competition among the groups. Although cooperation is stressed, there is value in competition. Team competition can win bonus points and assist students in grade improvement.

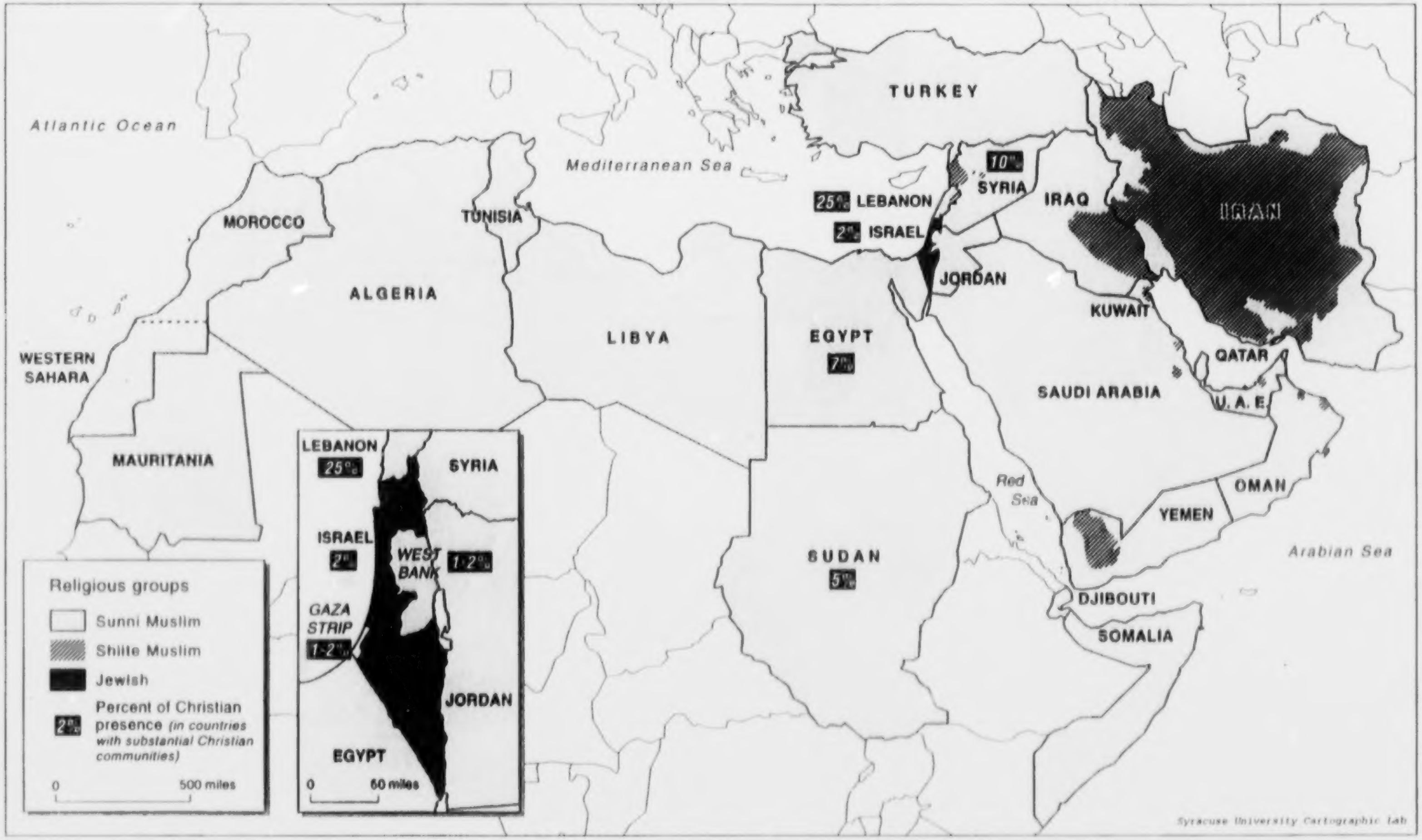
- The teacher serves as a facilitator, a resource and an observer. The teacher may join in a group for a short period of time and may assist the students in their various roles. It is advised that the teacher set limits so that the task assigned can be achieved by all.

- Closure activities can involve all members of the group as members are called upon to justify their answers, support their evidence and identify the attributes which led to the group decision. Even students with reading disabilities will be able to take part in the discussion.

- Cooperative learning lessons require organizational effort by the teacher. Readings must be carefully selected for high interest, relevance to topic and readability. Questions must be carefully delineated and the task clearly defined. Preparation will lead to a memorable learning experience for students.

Cooperative learning lessons can create busy and often noisy classrooms. The teacher must learn to exist in a situation which sometimes may appear chaotic. However, the students can emerge from these situations with outstanding insights. It is important for the teacher to create classrooms which are "risk-free" for their students. In participatory classrooms students feel less inhibited and more in control of their learning process.

Map 1: Religious Groups


Atlantic Ocean
Mediterranean Sea
TURKEY
10%
SYRIA
25%
LEBANON
2%
ISRAEL
IRAQ
IRAN
MOROCCO
TUNISIA
ALGERIA
LIBYA
EGYPT
7%
JORDAN
KUWAIT
QATAR
U.A.E.
SAUDI ARABIA
WESTERN SAHARA
MAURITANIA
Red Sea
OMAN
YEMEN
Arabian Sea
SUDAN
5%
DJIBOUTI
SOMALIA
LEBANON
25%
SYRIA
ISRAEL
2%
WEST BANK
1-2%
GAZA STRIP
1-2%
JORDAN
EGYPT
0
50 miles
Religious groups
Sunni Muslim
Shiite Muslim
Jewish
Percent of Christian presence (in countries with substantial Christian communities)
0
500 miles
Syracuse University Cartographic Lab

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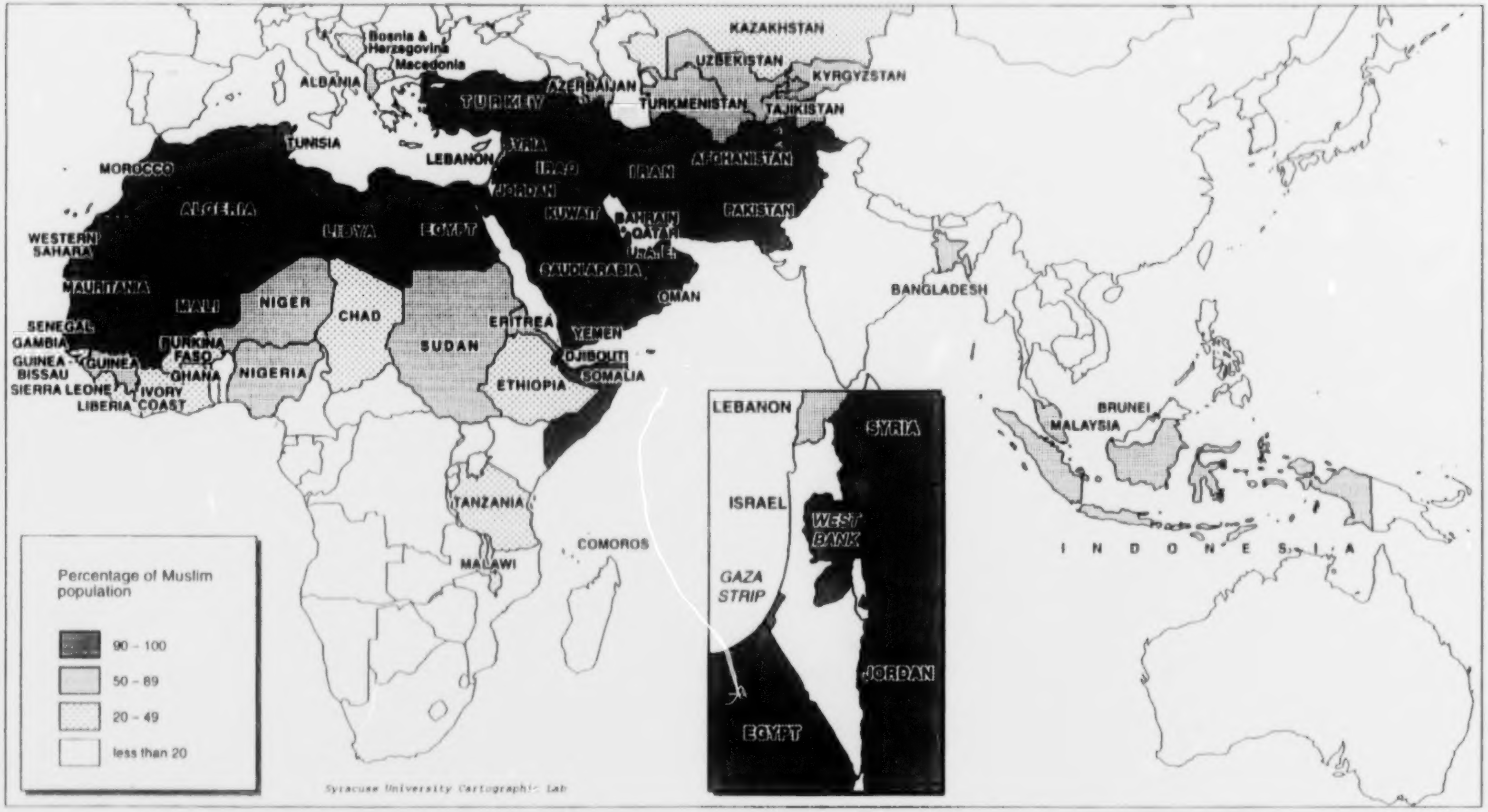
Map 2: Percentage of Muslim Population


KAZAKHSTAN
Bosnia & Herzegovina
Macedonia
ALBANIA
UZBEKISTAN
KYRGYZSTAN
AZERBAIJAN
TURKEY
TURKMENISTAN
TAJIKISTAN
TUNISIA
SYRIA
LEBANON
IRAQ
IRAN
AFGHANISTAN
MOROCCO
JORDAN
ALGERIA
KUWAIT
BAHRAIN
QATAR
PAKISTAN
WESTERN SAHARA
LIBYA
EGYPT
U.A.E.
SAUDI ARABIA
MAURITANIA
OMAN
BANGLADESH
MALI
NIGER
CHAD
SENEGAL
ERITREA
YEMEN
GAMBIA
BURKINA FASO
SUDAN
GUINEA-BISSAU
GUINEA
GHANA
NIGERIA
DJIBOUTI
SOMALIA
SIERRA LEONE
IVORY COAST
ETHIOPIA
LIBERIA
BRUNEI
MALAYSIA
TANZANIA
COMOROS
MALAWI
INDONESIA
LEBANON
SYRIA
ISRAEL
WEST BANK
GAZA STRIP
JORDAN
EGYPT
Percentage of Muslim population
90 - 100
50 - 89
20 - 49
less than 20

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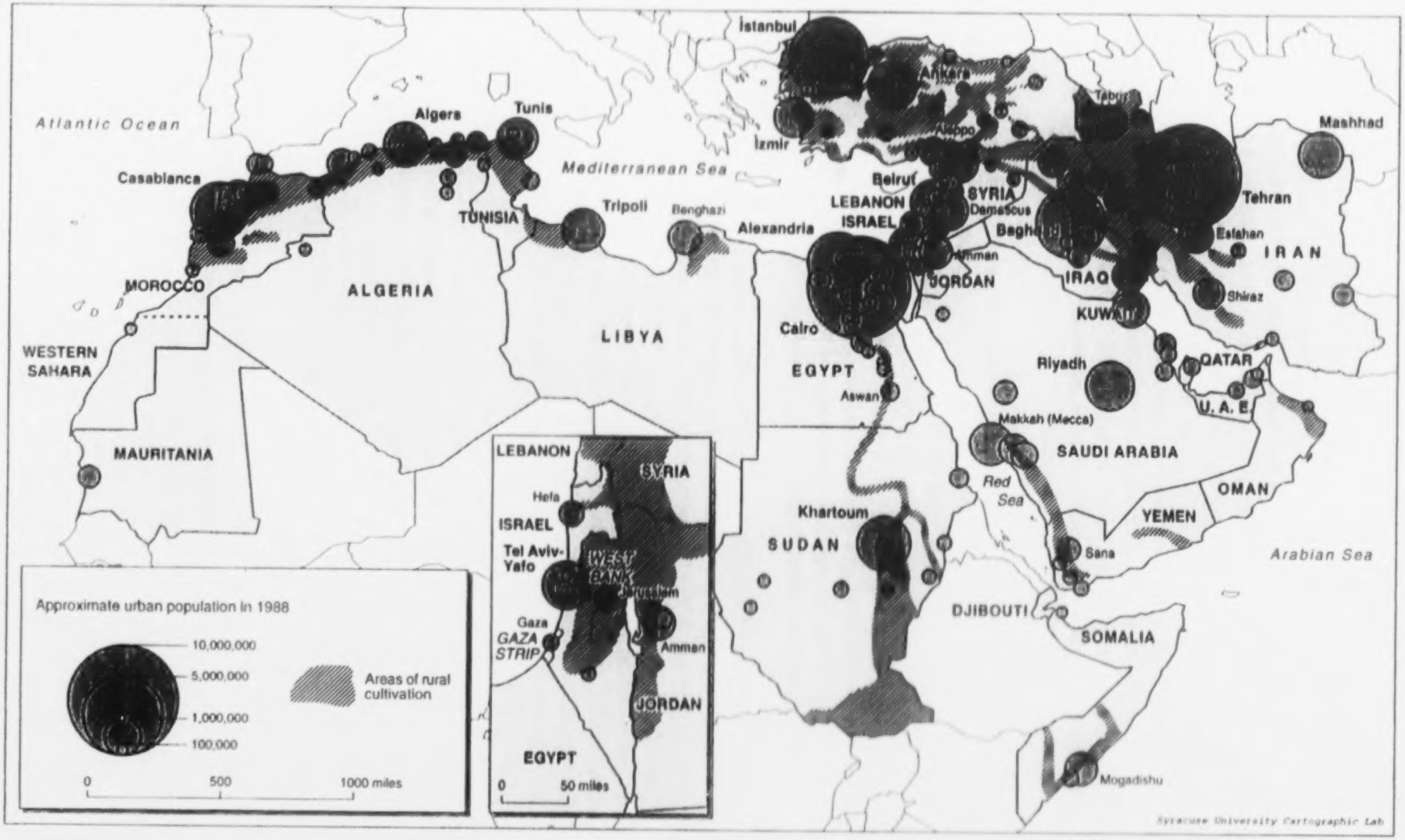
Map 3: Approximate Urban Population in 1988


Istanbul
Ankara
Izmir
Aleppo
Tabriz
Mashhad
Atlantic Ocean
Algers
Tunis
Casablanca
Mediterranean Sea
Tripoli
Benghazi
Alexandria
Beirut
LEBANON
ISRAEL
SYRIA
Damascus
Baghdad
Tehran
Esfahan
IRAN
Shiraz
TUNISIA
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
LIBYA
Amman
JORDAN
IRAQ
KUWAIT
Cairo
EGYPT
Aswan
Riyadh
QATAR
U. A. E.
WESTERN SAHARA
MAURITANIA
Makkah (Mecca)
SAUDI ARABIA
Red Sea
OMAN
YEMEN
Sana
Arabian Sea
Khartoum
SUDAN
DJIBOUTI
SOMALIA
Mogadishu
LEBANON
SYRIA
Hefa
ISRAEL
Tel Aviv-Yafo
WEST BANK
Jerusalem
Gaza
GAZA STRIP
Amman
JORDAN
EGYPT
0
50 miles
Approximate urban population in 1988
10,000,000
5,000,000
1,000,000
100,000
Areas of rural cultivation
0
500
1000 miles
Syracuse University Cartographic Lab

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Working with New Maps

It is imperative to include a map study along with the student readings. Maps become an excellent starting point for the study of Islam. Students can see the physical spread of Islam as well as the number of countries which has accepted the faith. They can also see Islam as a kind of monolith across the top of Africa reaching to the end of the Mediterranean Sea. More significantly, Islam is growing throughout Africa, extending as far south as Tanzania and west to the Ivory Coast. This region, in size alone, well exceeds Europe, the seat of Christianity. This visual information encourages our students to respect the spread of Islam as a major faith well beyond the Middle East. Maps 1-3 have been developed to accompany this guide, however, depending on individual preference and suitability, other maps could be supplemented.

As **Map 1: Religious groups** indicate, some of the nations in the region are 100% Muslim. Since that is the case, Islam dictates many of the life decisions for the people. With the exception of Israel, the populations extending from Western Sahara to Afghanistan are either Sunni or Shi'ite Muslim. The Jewish population in the region is only 2% of the total and there is a Christian presence in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt (mainly Coptic Christians) and the Sudan as well as small numbers of Christians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Therefore, the region is predominantly Muslim and Muslim populations in outlying regions such as Sudan, Niger and Nigeria are growing.

In looking at **Map 2: Percentage of Muslim population**, it is important for the students to recognize the pervasiveness of Islam across the top of the African continent as well as large portions of the former Soviet Union. Islam needs to be acknowledged as a significant factor for a large segment of the region. It is also very portentous that the fifth most populous nation in the world—one that has the largest Muslim population— is not part of the region. It is Indonesia. That region of southeast Asia, along with Malaysia, has a rapidly expanding Muslim population. A careful examination of the map indicates the pervasiveness of Islam even through central Europe, helping to explain the ethnic issues now aflame in the former Yugoslavia.

Islam also thrives in urban areas. **Map 3: Approximate Urban population in 1988** indicates the large population centers and the increasing urbanization throughout the region. The population concentration, especially along the eastern Mediterranean inland to Iran, dispels the idea of the region being one of nomadic camel drivers or small rural agriculturalists. There are two cities in the region with populations in excess of 10,000,000 (Cairo and Teheran) and many other urban areas in excess of 5,000,000 people (Baghdad, Casablanca, Alexandria, Istanbul).

Ideas

Maps are particularly effective classroom tools if each student receives an individual copy of the map and the teacher is able to make a transparency of each map. Then, while the students are looking at their maps on their desks, the teacher can direct a whole class activity. Maps can be overlaid on earlier maps, so that the students can see the relationships between the issues represented on each map. The students can also use these maps for individual exercises or further projects.

Teacher Guide to Student Readings: Insights and Strategies

An Issue of Identity: *Religion*

Ideas

This icon, when appearing throughout the teacher's guide, indicates suggested teaching strategies. **The readings in this selection are best used in the classroom either as individual pieces or a group of two. Suggestions for each reading follows.**

Although there are religions other than Islam in the Middle East, the focus of the readings on religion is on Islam. Where and how did Islam arise as a major faith? The first article, **Muhammad and the Beginnings of Islam**, by Professor Peters looks at the beginnings of Islam at the time of the life of the prophet Muhammad during the 6th c. A.D. The reading quickly outlines the influence of Muhammad during his lifetime. It is important to remember that of all the great religious leaders, we have the most information available about Muhammad since his activities were carefully documented during his lifetime. He is not a figure who is unknown to man or who did not walk among the people. His preaching accepted converts during his lifetime and his revelations in the Qur'an drew heavily from the monotheistic traditions of the region. As we begin to read some of the selections from the Qur'an, we see strong similarities to Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad himself would not persecute either Jews or Christians, calling them all "People of the Book," people from the same tradition of a belief in one God from the time of Abraham.

Ideas

After completing this reading, students could (a) write short comparative biographies of Muhammad and other religious leaders; (b) map Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Medina and then the subsequent spread of Islam; (c) research Muhammad's attitudes toward women and how they were similar to or different from the prevailing attitudes of the time.

Readings from the Qur'an gives students an excellent opportunity to use a primary source. Just as they read selections from both the Old and the New Testaments in either their social studies or their language arts classroom, readings from the Qur'an allows direct interpretation of Islam and the revelations the prophet Muhammad received from the angel Gabriel. We have selected readings which can constructively allow the students to develop parallels to Judaism and Christianity. Surah 2, the *Religion of Abraham* harkens back to Judaism and the source of monotheism in that region. Although the word *muslim* is not stressed, the concept of submission is present as Abraham speaks of the "one true God" and the people will follow the concept of that kind of worship rather than give it the title of Judaism or Christianity. It is really the beginning of the idea of "People of the Book."

The Qur'an selections that follow continue to show the connections between Islam and the faiths that preceded. The Qur'an is a Scripture for people who have not accepted the Scripture of the Jews or the Christians. The Qur'an speaks for the "Lord of all the worlds" and does not make a distinction among believers, calls on all "men who belong to a single community" to read the "Book with them containing the truth." The final reading from Surah 3: 100-110 speaks of *Islam as God's Chosen People* and warns the people against divisions among themselves. This is a different and far less menacing vision of Islam than is currently portrayed in the media. The religion appears more benign and holds far greater similarities to the major religious beliefs of the West. It is very important for students to recognize this and not view the Qur'an as an alien and frightening document.

Ideas

Muslims call themselves "People of the Book." They also call Jews and Christians "People of the Book." A comparison of the three religions of the Middle East would be very useful for students. In the Appendix of readings, there is an excellent series of excerpts which students can identity. This "test" can be the beginning of a discussion of the religions. As an example, the *Creation* selection is one found in all cultures and many religions. It is almost non-denominational in its conception of the creation of the world. Many teachers find this useful as part of a large examination of creation stories across cultures—Gilgamesh, the Japanese creation story, the Mayan story of creation and, certainly, the story of Genesis. As an introduction to the words of the Qur'an, this surah is analogous to other stories around the world. For students unfamiliar with Islam, it can be a comfortable introduction to the religious text.

Muhammad continues to serve as a model for Muslims—the "beautiful model" (Surah 33:21). The article by Annamarie Schimmel, **Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety**, (see Teacher Reading section in the appendix) tries to assist non-Muslims in understanding the role of the Prophet in Islamic history and culture. It explains the Prophetic tradition of the Hadith as well as an analysis of the character of Muhammad. Teachers might find selections from this article useful in their classrooms to further exemplify the humanity of Muhammad. This article is valuable to understand how the Prophet is viewed in an Islamic society.

Another point of comparison between Islam and the other faiths of the region is found in the article **Qur'an as Spoken Word.** This article focuses on why it is important to hear, listen to and speak the Qur'an. Its tradition is that of an oral document and there are constant injunctions to **Say!** throughout the Qur'an. Again cultural comparisons can be drawn as this tradition is not Islamic in origin. Ancient Judaic scholars would **Say!** the Torah and young and old men could be heard chanting the verses of the Old Testament. Even followers of Christianity, in celebration of the mass, would respond orally to scriptural reading and recite prayers. It is exciting to think of the Qur'an today as an active spoken document. It permeates the lives of its followers from birth to death and offers a saying or a phrase as part of the everyday life of the people. As young children are receiving their religious education, both Jewish and Muslim children memorize segments of their holy text which are called upon on the passage through life. Sometimes it is simple statements just blessing God for his kindness or asking him for his help; at other times they are more complex and recall the prayers of their youth.

Ideas

Recitation of religious scriptures is commonplace as a method to bond parishioners. Students can look at the history of public recitation and research how it acts as a psychological tie. Students can share their own religious training experience to discuss the validity of "saying" scripture and how that early childhood experience has lifelong implications for their behavior and moral code. The teacher can also direct students to other examples of oral learning—e.g. poetry, songs, cheers, etc.

In the reading, **Judaism, Christianity and Islam: The Classical Texts and Their Interpretation**, both the writers speak about the sources of the law. However, it is important to note that for Muslims the Qur'an is only one source of the law. Another source is the Prophetic tradition. When the Prophet received the Qur'an it was as it is today and no alterations were made over time. In other words, Muhammad had the opportunity to make comments about each of the surahs of the Qur'an. However, with time, the accuracy of the Prophet's remarks is sometimes in question or there may be some areas where there is neither a Chorionic text nor a prophetic interpretation. In that case, Islamic jurists turn to the Shari'ah which is the accumulation of the traditions of Islam. A jurist today would consult the jurists of past centuries to determine how they may have interpreted a particular question. An interesting comparison would be the sources of the Islamic legal system to the sources of the Western legal system.

There is a specific order of priority in exploring the roots of the law. The primary source of the law is the Qur'an. It was the law at the time of revelation and remains historically constant. The second source of the law is the hadith, Muhammad's comments while he was still alive and able to interpret the Qur'an. After his death, people still needed interpretation during the following 1400 years. Situations arose which were not always apparent from the Qur'an because of the changing nature of events. Since these situations might not have occurred during Muhammad's lifetime, he was unable to interpret them. Therefore, the interpretation now falls into the hands of the jurists and, when the Qur'an and the hadith cannot be used, reasoning and consensus prevail. Among the four major schools of interpretation, in some areas only the Qur'an and hadith can be used and reasoning and consensus are invalid, while others say you can use reasoning and consensus. But the hierarchy remains constant: the Qur'an, the hadith, interpretation, consensus.

Ideas

The major religions of the Middle East go far back in time. Obviously, like other ancient documents, they could not foretell the future. Nor were they aware of the many instances religion would be invoked in the succeeding generations. A valid classroom exercise would be to examine the vibrancy of Islam from an issue-centered perspective. Students can select three or four contemporary issues and study how interpretation has changed (or not changed) over time. Examples might be: role of women in the workplace; the rights of inheritance in the Middle East; birth control, contraception and abortion; terrorism. Some of these issues are discussed in later readings. Students can develop Anticipation Guides (see *Teaching Methodology* section) and then read the later selections to check their predictions. They can collect newspaper and magazine articles on a single issue.

We have been dealing with Islam on a theoretical level. Far more significant is the impact of the religion on the lives of the people and the role it plays in developing the moral code of behavior. **Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East** examines the pervasiveness of Islam. The faith governs virtually all actions, extending far beyond the traditional religious boundaries. They encompass family relationships, social affiliations, commercial intercourse and all other encounters. The moral code becomes the code for living.

Muslim women, in particular are governed by a specific set of rules. In **Family Law: The Rights and Obligations of Modern Muslim Women**, women's issues of marriage, divorce and inheritance are examined as they undergo reinterpretation. Women are forced to speak out for their equal rights and encourage legislation which works to improve their condition.

The Population Question Revisited highlights the role of The Middle East in the population explosion. High birthrates raise the issue of family size and birth control. Just as a debate is raging in the West regarding contraception, the Muslim world (and the Hindu lands of South Asia) must also revisit the population question.

Students are always intrigued by the impact of religion on our daily lives. Rituals and rules interest and confound them. In the dual selection, **Pillars of the Faith**, we can "hear" the voice of a Muslim as he expresses his feelings about his world and his belief system. Hajj Brahim, a staunch believer, speaks of how Islam helps him understand the world, especially when he is confronted with difficult situations. He approaches Islam with faith and rationality, his underlying strength coming from his sound belief system, his everyday actions motivated by his pragmatic responses. His final statement tells it all: "Count on God, and tie up your camel."

The second reading, *In An Antique Land*, examines the Islamic annual ritual, Ramadan, in a small Egyptian village. The daily fasting debilitates the village population. As the day progresses, the women

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prepare the food for the breaking of the fast and as the sun sets the community gathers to eat and drink before returning to the mosque for prayer.

Ideas

All of the readings above can be treated together since they are concerned with the "how" of religion—"how" does religion impact on our lives. The five selections can be organized as a jigsaw cooperative learning lesson. Each group can receive one reading and deal with the question, "To what extent does Islam affect life on a daily basis in the Middle East." The teacher can develop an organizer:

Everyday Life	Muslim Women	Population	Hajj Brahim	Antique Land

Each group can report out, adding information to the grid. The teacher can either record all this on the chalkboard or an overhead transparency. The transparency is valid because it can be used to compare answers as well as see how they change. The materials can then be passed to another group for their additions. This can continue until each group has read each selection. Then a composite picture can be created of the influence of Islam on the lives of the people in the area. Case studies can be developed and the students can write and enact scenarios from this data. There are multiple ways this rich collection can help the students get personal insights into Islam and its relationship to identity. As a concluding activity, students can personalize their own experiences with religion, writing how it has either helped or hindered them in developing their identity. This kind of personal reading is very different from the theoretical basis for Islam; it more closely parallels student's relationships with elements of their own faith. In this kind of lesson, the application is very significant. It tends to "humanize" other faiths and allows students more opportunity to empathize with people of different religious backgrounds. It also removes the "demonization" from other religions as students realize that people do similar activities and often practice similar rituals.

The Muslim population of the Middle East is largely Sunni except for Iran, where the majority of the population are Shi'ites. This split in Islam developed very early in its history. The final set of readings investigate **Shi'ism**, looking at the *Historical Growth of Shi'ism* as a starting point. The schism between the two sects began soon after the death of the Prophet. The minority became known as "partisans" or "shi'iah" of 'Ali. Although 'Ali and his followers felt they were the legitimate heirs, they did not oppose the choice of society. 'Ali continued to follow the "beautiful model" of the prophet, dedicating his life to Islamic religious studies. In the first century after the death of the caliphate, there was major dissention among the Muslims and this rift between Sunni and Shi'ites continues today.

The second reading, *The Roots of Shi'ism in Early History*, further explains the succession of the early caliphs. The third selection, *Shi'ism and the Ta'ziyyah*, is the traditional passion play which is enacted throughout Shi'ite groups even today. It shows the martyrdom of Hasten, the grandson of Muhammad and the son of 'Ali. The play brings alive the tragedy of Hasten's death and makes all viewers feel responsible for the treachery committed against him, keeping alive the age-old controversy. If a teacher plans to reenact the passion play in the classroom, the reading **Martyrdom** by Abdulaziz A. Schedina (see *Teacher Reading* section in the appendix) will provide excellent background information.

Ideas

Students, as well as their teachers, often misunderstand and misinterpret Shi'ism. They are unfamiliar with the roots nor the schism it has caused in Islam. The passion play is an excellent opportunity for students to role play an historical event. This passion play, like others, draws upon the emotions of the viewers. The rift in Islam also helps the students understand contemporary political issues and events. Students can research passion plays in other cultures and examine how they are used for political, nationalistic and religious purposes. More than anything, the enactment of the passion play is another illustration of the religion as a living and dynamic aspect of Islam.

An Issue of Identity: *Community*

When we speak of community, we mean several things. A community can mean your own family, from the nuclear to the extended family, or your neighborhood, your district, your region, your city, your urban or rural environment. In all cases, the community in which you live and where you have your daily interactions plays an important role in determining your identity. The selections in the *Community* component are very diverse and, hopefully, interesting. These readings in *Community* are rather challenging as the students are asked to examine various issues and roles: rural and urban, male and female, young and old, angel and thug. Each of the voices is somewhat indebted to the community and continues to be part of a larger identity than the self.

The first four passages deal with the impact of the community on the child as he is growing up. We have attempted to show how the urban and the rural experiences each influence the child in his maturation and the decisions and life choices he makes.

Istanbul Boy is a very famous selection from the autobiography of Azuz Nesin, a beloved Turkish writer who died recently. Moving to Istanbul from a small Anataolian village was a very exhilarating and frightening experience for the young boy. The move to the city meant that Nesim could attend school for the first time, an experience that was not taken for granted nor expected in the village setting. The family, suffering dislocation and illness, paid scant attention to the young boy's intellectual needs. When a friend visited and showed him the possibility of attending school, his life changed and his expectations soared. As the piece progresses we share the excitement as his intelligence and learning are tested by the school officials. We also revel in his aspirations which are now available through life in the city.

The two selections **The Mantle of the Prophet** and **An Iranian Village Boyhood**, look at Iran in different time periods. The first reading shows how rural Iran was deeply religious but the focus of education extended beyond religious issues. As the mullah reads with the students, his position is more contemporary in the approach to his material. It is important to note that the educational experience is taking place in a madreseh (where we see an example of interpretation of the Chorionic tradition) while the state schools are secular in subject matter. The dual educational experience provided him with a balanced learning environment—an environment which developed his thinking abilities and sense of self. Conversely, the second reading, **An Iranian Village Boyhood**, looks at growing up in the village where life was governed by more traditional pursuits. The community rallied for the passion play (see *Shi'ism and the Ta'ziyyah* in *Religion* section) and the massive group effort extended to special banquets. Ramadan was another community effort (see *In An Antique Land* in *Religion* section). Whereas in the previous piece we see the secular thrust of education, the village was largely a religious environment, marking time with festivals, holidays and feasts. Education focused on the Qur'an almost singularly. This educational experience, after the Iranian revolution, supports a more traditional educational approach.

A Bedouin Boyhood describes "a golden day in his boyhood when nothing happened." The experience of a school-age boy growing up among his people, following the rhythms of the day which often became the rhythms of the year, provides the author with the key to his identity, his sense of self and his knowledge of his heritage. It is a boyhood rich in small incidents and close interpersonal relationships. It shows us how significant and lasting are the attachments of our early years in helping us create who we are.

Ideas

"Growing Up," a rite of passage, occurs in all societies around the world. Children go to school, interact with their siblings and their parents, are influenced by their grandparents, and reflect the community where they live. The four readings above are about growing up as a young boy in the Muslim Middle East. The experience is both rural and urban. The common strand is education. Once again, a cooperative learning strategy would work effectively to analyze this educational experience. The four groups would each have a different selection. Each would deal with educational expectations and experiences. The formal as against the informal educational experience can also be discussed. What has a greater impact on a young boy's identity—secular learning, religious learning, tutorial learning, or practical learning. On a larger scale, how does education contribute to the formation of a community, and in the greater arena, the nation? Students will have no difficulty relating to these issues and enjoying these delightful readings.

An excellent reading on women and rural life is **Lives in an Iranian Village: The Women of Deh Koh**. We have included two readings from this book (see **Watching the World from Sarah's Loom**, in *Gender*) because of their outstanding portrayals of women's lives and rural lives. We feel that they can be used interchangeably but the piece about Maryam gives us some interesting insights into the twined kinship relations in traditional settings. Maryam, although still fairly young by Western standards, is considered among the older generation because of the age of her deceased husband. She is still vital ("feisty" would be the Western appellation) and very determined to protect her rights in a male hierarchical society. She is alone but instinctively understands she must fight for her property and her space. With the voice of a feminist, she shouts for her rights, getting promises from her extended family that they will repair her damaged veranda. In the long run Maryam wins her battle by calling on family ties and saving the honor of all the parties. She retains her independence and respect.

Ideas

The two readings from Women of Deh Koh are fairly interchangeable in terms of their validity for discussing either community of gender. Through a carefully wrought portrait of extraordinary village women, we see the role they play in the community interactions. In both cases, it might be interesting for the students to construct a chart of the family kinship patterns. This will give them a more visual impression of the linked relationships in a small village. The more artistic students might even attempt to construct the housing in the village or draw a diagram of the village. From the political point of view, it would be constructive for students to examine women's political rights in other segments (*Gender*, *Religion*) and see if *de jura* rulings operate in a *de facto* situation. An interesting writing assignment could be an interview with Maryam, turning the narrative into a dialogue.

But life in the village is changing, largely due to TV. Once electricity was brought into villages, TV changed the lives of the people. In **Friday Prayers to Video Nights**, we see how the Iranian Revolution is being undercut by the invasion of Western videos, replacing time spent in the mosques for either religious or political events. In some ways, the divisions between urban and rural communities are disappearing as television is changing peoples appetites and aspirations.

Ideas

This reading could effectively be used as background for either a "town meeting" or a debate. The issue is apparent—to what extent should TV be curbed to keep the values of the revolution as well as the community? Using this as a theme, students can prepare position papers for a debate or engage in a discussion with a moderator. The application of this concern to the students lives moves the issue of TV into a larger context.

Om Gad, Wife of the Garage keeper, is a wonderful vignette of urban life among the poor in Cairo. Om Gad relates her life story as she moves from the rural community to live in the metropolis. Both she and her husband struggle economically and through the illness and death of several of their children. They make a life for themselves in their community although they are still motivated by basic rural values and a strong belief in the power of God.

Ideas

Om Gad lives in two communities. Since she is among the urban poor, she does not have access to the advantages of the city. Her values are still village based and family-oriented. Many students can relate to this. They are aware of the refugee issue (be in internal or external) as well as the question of migrations within a country. It is also an issue of displacement. These can be dealt with through compelling questions and writing activities which engage the students in an in-depth analysis of the role of the community in helping a person determine his/her identity. Om Gad is sustained by religious faith. Students can find other examples in other cultures of poor and traditional people who find comfort in religion.

In some of the more Westernized urban centers, the middle class has mimicked the middle class of the West. In the selection, **Casablanca Picturing: Portraits of Power in a Modern City**, you see the influence of videos at weddings—a phenomenon which is very popular in the West. The bride and the family look only at how they "look" and the ritual qualities of the marriage are downplayed. Entertainment looms as the major concern rather than the importance of the occasion. Tradition takes second place to interactions among the guests.

Ideas

This piece is evidence of changing values in the region. Students might bring in a video of a wedding of a family member. Then they could read the piece about Casablanca, comparing the wedding videos. Students can discuss how westernization has influenced middle class values, eroding some of the community values of the region. This has created a deeper rift between the classes in some of the societies in the Muslim Middle East.

City Life produces thugs in all parts of the world. **Memoirs of a Street Tough: Yusuf Abu Haggag** looks at the reminiscences of a Cairo petty criminal. His street gang and their activities have moved them away from acting as protectors of the people of a district to the predators of the people. They rob, steal and engage in petty crime. Their lives, like those of criminals in urban centers any where in the world, are peripheral and dangerous. In the long run, after many encounters with the police and life on the street, Yusuf Haggag becomes a respected professional and settles down.

The most enthusiastic writer about Cairo is the Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz. He has always lived in Cairo, it has been his source of inspiration as well as the location for his novels. He draws his identity from the streets and the districts he knows well and they are accurately reproduced in his works (see *Nationalism* for section titled *Palace Walk*). In **Naguib Mahfouz Remembers**, he walks through his city discussing how each of his experiences helped to form his identity. At this point, Mahfouz and Cairo are linked as each acts to impress itself upon the other.

Ideas

The two writings on Cairo can be taught as a compare and contrast strategy: the underbelly of the city and the more refined and traditional zones. Students will see that a city has many influences on a person. These influences are often neighborhood based. The street thug, living among a lower class element, follows his peers. The more traditional and better educated look at the city as a rich center for experience and use the city as a force in helping them develop. In many ways, urban centers are multiple communities, some totally divorced from the intellectual life of the city. The reading on Om Gad can be referenced again as another component of the city community. Students can be given some sections from any of Mahfouz's work as well as photographs of Cairo. They can try to match the photograph to the literature, showing how Mahfouz effectively converted the city into a literary experience.

An Issue of Identity: *Ethnicity*

Although we speak of the Muslim Middle East, the region has many ethnic groups. We have tried to present some of the voices which express the diversity of the region.

Ideas

It is important for the students to recognize diversity as an issue in the Middle East. Although the religious majority is Islamic, many smaller groups continue to live in the region. Teachers can return to the maps and, as they are reading the selections in this section, refer the students to the countries cited for their ethnic groups. This will present a less biased picture of the region.

Issues with the Kurds throughout the Muslim Middle East can be found in the daily newspapers. The Kurds are spread throughout Iran, Iraq and Turkey. Some have retained their ethnic "purity"; others have become more integrated into Middle Eastern society. There continues to be a strong movement for the establishment of an independent state of Kurdistan, a state the Kurds claim was promised to them after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Through the intervening years, the Kurds maintain they have suffered ethnic discrimination which has resulted in political isolation. Some Kurds claim they have been the victims of genocide. The material dealing with the Kurdish issue, **The Kurds in Iraq, Iran and Turkey: Three Kurdish Perspectives,** is controversial and can be inflammatory. It is important to remember that these articles express the Kurdish point of view and none of the nations where the Kurds live are responding. However, it is important for the students to acknowledge the ethnic and political claims of the Kurds. In each case, the writer calls for Kurdish independence, presenting historical and current arguments to substantiate the position that the Kurds are an ethnically discriminated minority in three host countries. The underlying question of Kurdish resistance is suggested although little mention is made of the Kurdish extremist organization, the P.K.K. The poem, the first of our selections on *Ethnicity*, **The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** shows the despair of Kurds seeking a homeland.

Ideas

The material in the three selections expresses the Kurdish point of view. Using a map of the region, groups can read each of the selections and locate the Kurds in Iran, Iraq and Turkey. Students can research a more definitive history of the Kurds—their origins, their migrations, their demands. Biographies of Kurdish people can be written by the students. It is also important for the students to understand the attitudes in the host country toward the Kurdish minorities. Students can compile contemporary newspaper articles dealing with the on-going Kurdish issue.

Contemporary Iran, although it is primarily a Shi'ite Muslim nation, has multiple minorities aside from the Kurds. The selection, **Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Modern Iran**, delineates the ethnic minorities in the country. Whereas the historical past created religious conflict, the present is rift with ethnic conflict. Among some of the many ethnic groups in Iran there is a call for nationhood. Some of this problem is economically motivated. Other issues are the result of political events since the end of the Cold War. Many former Soviet peoples living on the border with Iran, have crossed to Iran, creating new pockets of ethnic minorities. The final group, those who are in religious minority groups, may be uncomfortable in the Islamic state.

Ideas

How does this reading on ethnic diversity in Iran shatter our stereotype of the uniformity of peoples in Iran? Students can compare the groups in Iran to ethnic groups in South Asia or the United States. This should help the students realize the multicultural aspect of the area.

A fascinating article, **The Last Arab Jews: The Communities of Jerba, Tunisia**, looks at a medieval enclave existing in the modern world. Since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, many Jews throughout the Middle East have migrated to the Jewish homeland. But in some small and often isolated areas, Jewish communities have continued to exist, following time-honored traditions and preserving their identity against the mainstream. This is true in Jerba, Tunisia, where Jews and Muslims co-exist although the Jews closely circumscribe their movements into and around the Muslim community. The Jewish population is constantly declining in number but those who remain feel allegiance to their religious ethnicity and their education at the hands of the state. This small community is truly an anomaly in the Muslim Middle East.

Ideas

Time stands still for some groups. The Jewish community in Jerba can be likened to the Amish in America or the Mennonites. They continue to pursue traditional habits. Students can do a cross-cultural analysis of these small communities world-wide. It would also be interesting for students to look at the Hasidic community in New York City. Students need to examine the internal mechanisms of groups which choose not to assimilate. What are the aspects of their community experience which keep them apart? How are they viewed by those outside the community. Students might find it useful to write fictitious diaries of what it is like to live in a "closed" community, an island among others.

Modern-day Turks, like modern Hindus and modern Greeks, find part of their identity determined by their literary heritage. The Hindu look to the *Mahabhara* and *Ramayana* to dictate the ways they lead their lives. For the Greeks, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are their epic links to the past. Turks have *The Book of Dede Korkut*, a 12th c. epic of the nomadic Turkic people. The story is comprised of prologue and twelve legends told largely in prose and enriched by frequent passages of verse. The story traces the travels of the Turks, their exploits and their customs. Although the Turks are Muslims, they have an allegiance to their religion as well as their heritage. The two are inter-twined in this epic schoolchildren in Turkey read even today. Our selection, **The Story of Bugach Khan, Son of Dirse Khan**, Legend I of the epic, is noted for it's attention to familial and gender relationships and other interactions among people.

Ideas

A literary epic is the entry into many societies. A most useful strategy in examining how the epic gives us special insights into a society is to select a portion of the epic and read that in conjunction with a non-fiction piece describing some aspect of a culture. If the choices are carefully made, there is a direct connection between the themes outlined in

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the epic and the daily life in the society. For example, in teaching Ramayana, we see interpersonal relationships which are spelled out in the jati system in India. The same would be true of the Turkish epic. Students would read the selection, and then engage in research for an historical example. They would then explain how the epic helped them better understand the history. Students could search for epics, sagas or narratives from their own culture. An anthology could be developed of epics from different societies, epics which help explain the identity of a people.

The final series of readings from **Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East** allows the voice of three Middle Easterns to speak—an Armenian , a Jew and a Marinade Christian. These ethnic voices tell, in their own words, the experiences of being a minority and, at the same time, trying to retain your own identity. Hagob Hagobian, the Armenian truck driver in Iran, banded together with other Armenians, finding protection in the guild. We notice the classification of employment based on ethnicity in the trucking industry in Iran. In the second selection, on the other hand, the Jewish doctor experienced isolation because of his religious beliefs. His professional services were necessary for the state but he was consistently deprived excellent economic opportunities and worked in remote and often unhealthy regions of Iraq. He was aware of the prejudice against him, not for skills but his religious identity. He finally left Iraq after escaping arrest. Sumaya, the Lebanese Marinade Christian housemaid, remained in Beirut throughout the civil war, even though the family she worked for left the country. Her status improved as she retained the household and she made an independent life in the city. With time, the neighbors began to think she owned the apartment and her own persona changed to that of a family companion rather than a housemaid. Her Christian identity was accepted.

Ideas

These three indigenous voices should be used in a cooperative learning lesson. Each group would receive a reading and determine (a) how the ethnic minority was viewed by the larger society, (b) how the ethnic minority was treated by the larger society, © how the ethnic minority functioned under these conditions cited previously, (d) what actions the minority had to take to retain their own identity. An analysis of these questions will show disparity in treatment of ethnic groups in the Middle East. Students could compare these voices to those of ethnic minorities in their own communities.

An Issue of Identity: *Nationalism*

Nationalism came to the Middle East as a result of the imperialistic ventures of European powers as well as a reaction to the Ottoman Empire. Through the 1950's, a map of the region would have indicated the presence of colonial powers in a number of the countries or the influence of colonial powers on the regime of other nations. Today it is a different story. There are very few, if any, remaining enclaves of colonialism.

Any national anthem gives us special insight into how people feel about their country. We have included the **Egyptian National Anthem**, an example to be studied for similarities with other nationalistic songs. In all cases, the nation shines above the people who are described as "children" following the beacon of the nationhood.

Ideas

National anthems, like national flags or national stamps, are excellent cultural artifacts for students to study. The Egyptian national anthem should be compared with that of other anthems of the region (and other regions) to dissect the underlying political agenda and the national patriotic fervor. National Anthems are easily obtainable from the country Embassy or Consulate.

The development of the modern nation-state in the Middle East follows many of the same patterns as we see in other regions of the world. In so many cases, control is wrested from the imperialistic power, often causing death, especially among the more idealistic youth. In Naguib Mahfouz's, **Palace Walk,** the first novel of his famous Trilogy about Egypt, he relates the story of Fahmy, the brilliant son who is caught in the nationalistic movement against Britain in the early 1920's. Fahmy is torn between the need to accede to his father's wishes and his own principles, principles which propel him to join the anti-British forces and lead a group of students in a march against the British. The students were unarmed and the demonstration was advertised as peaceful. But Fahmy becomes a victim of the nationalistic fervor and is killed by a British bullet. This is a touching account of a young man's desire for liberty and nationhood and his faith in the future, only to be stopped by a sniper's bullet. The tale Mahfouz presents can be replicated in other nations throughout the world as the powers of nationalism call to the people.

Television is an excellent forum for nationalistic preaching. T.V. is no longer foreign or unattainable throughout the Middle East. Middle Easterners, working abroad, send money home or bring back TV sets, once novelties in both cities and rural villages. Now TV is beamed into remote villages via satellite and TV plays a major role in determining how people feel, what they wear and eat, how they should think and their aspirations. **Dramatic Reversals: Political Islam and Egyptian Television**, looks at TV serials and their subliminal impact on the thinking of a nation. Although the Egyptian government espouses the secular state, the rise of militant Islam and some extremist groups, play disparate roles in Egyptian serials. Through the 1980's the serials (through the voices of their characters) did share the discussion about nationhood and downplayed the issue of the Islamist movement. Since the 1990's, the serials have tried to combat terrorism. They have tried to avoid overt signs of religion as the source of morality. Religious television exists independent of the serials and both the serials and the religious leaders deplore the corruption and consumerism of Egypt. However, the serials feel that Muslim discourse should not be part of dramatic television and the extremist is often portrayed in a negative fashion. This is consistent with the government's policy of protecting the neutrality of the television industry.

Poetry is highly effective as a genre to inspire nationalistic thinking. Poetry is also a natural outlet for Middle Easterners since much of their literary tradition is rooted in poetry. The poems we have included are designed to stir the nationalistic feelings of people in the region from the inspirational **Knowledge and Teaching and the Teacher's Task** through the Darwish liberation poetry, such as **The Identity Card.** The voices of the oppressed, disenfranchised, overlooked and undercounted are loudly stated in this collection.

Ideas

In many cases, nationalism is a personal response to how a person feels about his country and what he is willing to do to express those feelings. Literature, theater, television and poetry become the genres which can discuss nationalistic feelings and the role of the individual within the nation. In all these venues, the message is very strong but not as confrontational as editorials, political tracts, etc. Palace Walk as well as the poetry of Darwish and other Middle Eastern writers is very strong. Students can find examples of nationalistic stories and poetry in other cultures. These could be compared to the voices of the Middle East as to fervor and purpose. The use of theater and television for political purposes can also be found in other societies. The teacher, working with groups of students, can research examples of nationalistic drama and television, reading the scripts for illustrations of how the voices of the people reflect their feelings about nationhood and their identity issues. The "soap operas" of

American TV, although less strident in purpose, also indicate how the characters feel about their community and their nation. Another interesting approach for students would be to translate the inner thought of Fahmy into a nationalistic speech which he could make for the demonstration.

In 1948, as a result of the Arab-Israeli War, the United Nations partitioned the mandated territory of Palestine. Many of the former Palestinians became displaced persons, living in refugee camps or other lands. These people had their own story to tell, the story of the children who grew up without a homeland but longing for a nation. The excerpt from **Palestine's Children** tells what life was like during the time of the hostilities and the repercussions of that experience on a young boy and his family who had fled. The young boys's sense of belonging is lost and he reverts to living on an elemental level. His experiences as a child developed into the adult with strong nationalistic feelings for a homeland for Palestinians.

Ideas

The issue of refugees, either in the Middle East or other areas of the world, is a major issue for today's students. Palestine's Children could be Bosnian children or Ugandan children or Haitian children. Children all over the world become the victims of nationalistic feelings. Students need to contact organizations like UNHCR (United Nations High Commission on Refugees), located in Geneva, to gather information on the children as refugees and the affect of that status on their identity. Will displaced children revert to "freedom fighters?" How traumatic is refugee status for young children? What is the connection between living in disputed territory and the development of strong nationalistic sentiments? How effective are refugees in adapting to another culture since they often leave their nation involuntarily. In particular, how do orphaned children deal with the issue of refugee status and the multiple adjustments they need to make when the hostilities are over? These conceptual issues can develop a sub-theme which can be carried into other regions.

Turkish Nationalism took a different form. The Turks, after the downfall of the Ottoman Empire, did not need to rebel against outside imperialistic forces. Instead, they had to create a strong state which exemplified the feelings of the people. Turkey had been referred to as "the sick man of Europe." Educated Turks saw alternatives. In the selection, **Halide Edib Adivar: Turkish Nationalist**, the reader meets a female Turkish nationalist who found the skills and poise to play a large role in the transformation of the Turkish state. She was a Muslim woman with a strong nationalistic point-of-view and developed the necessary power to convert people to her position.

Ideas

Turkish nationalism and the development of the secular Turkish state coincides with the life and times of Kemal Ataturk. Students can read a biography (or short selection from a biography) to look at Ataturk's vision for a secular Turkey, as well as the steps he recommended for Turkish nationalism. Other prominent Turkish nationalists can be investigated. In researching and compiling a brief biography of Middle Eastern nationalists, students can examine the roles each played in nationalistic movements in their country. Students could develop a role play or a dramatic production of nationalistic leaders calling for change in their countries.

The last selection, **Arab Nationalism: An Anthology**, traces the course of modern Arab nationalism from 1952 onwards. We see the strong framework for political nationalism, which involved, for some Arabs, dissolution of their intellectual ties with the West. This meant re-examining their history and rethinking their past from the less skewed angle of imperialism. It also means a return to some traditional values, especially those espoused by Islam. When Nasser wrote of the philosophy of his revolution, he tied the Middle East into the Arab world, the African continent and the far-flung Islamic world. Arab nationalism was not restricted to the current political boundaries of the Middle East. Instead, the strongest factors in the nationalist movement were Arabness and then the extension of the bonds to all Islamic people around the world.

Ideas

Many of the activities suggested previously could be applied to the Egyptian example. Nasser was a seminal figure in Egyptian nationalism. His role could be compared to that of Ataturk in Turkey. Even before that strategy, students can review the role of imperialism in creating nationalism and debate the issue if the former is the cause of the latter. How intrinsic was nationalism to emotions and ideologies inherent in the region? How significant is the force of Arabness in binding people together? Does nationalism lead to Pan-Arabism in Middle East? Does Islam lead to Pan-Islamism around the world? These could be exciting debate topics for students to discuss.

An Issue of Identity: *Gender*

In the study of the Muslim Middle East, the gender issue tends to be obfuscated. For Middle Eastern women, depending upon class, educational level and country, there is no gender issue. For other women, facing an entirely different set of circumstances, the issues are huge. However, it is important to recognize that for women in the Middle East, mainly Muslim women, issues which may seem constricting and anti-female are largely culture based and tradition ridden, and not of religion origin.

At the time the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad, the position of women among the tribes of the Middle East was very poor. The statements in the Qur'an were liberating for women, allowing them a greater range of rights. Muhammad was a strong supporter of the rights of women and spoke vehemently for the need for women to have more education and greater rights. His own relationship with his wife was loving and open and he adored his daughter Fatimah, considering her his equal. It is what has happened to the thinking of Muhammad that has been difficult for the women of the area.

For some women, life is endlessly difficult. In **Doing Daily Battle: Interviews with Moroccan Women**, we see the efforts of women to seek their identity as an uphill battle in a traditional state. They are forced into early marriages and successive pregnancies. These decisions deny them the right to an education. When Zubaida Zannati speaks of her daughter she focuses on the thirst for knowledge as well as providing her daughter with the opportunity to attend school and make her own life choices. Older women, especially those born in the early part of the 20th century, have had extremely harsh lives. Coping with children at a very young age, they have also had to work both in the fields and in the factories. Their lives have been totally dictated by their gender and they have been exploited. Their hours in the factories exceeded any Western standard of fair labor practice. Their female children are impressed into labor at a very early age, especially in the carpet factories where their manual dexterity makes them invaluable in following the cartoon patterns. However, with some degree of modernization in Morocco, Malika and Latifa find they do not need to have the life-long toil of their mother. They can make some important decisions, such as marriage, which will give them greater economic flexibility.

On the other hand, in the **Portraits of Turkish Women**, we see that the roles of women in a secular state are more diverse. Since Kemal Ataturk believed in equality for both sexes, the Turkish Revolution encouraged the intellectual and economic development of women. Although some women still occupy traditional crafts such as weaving, other women have moved into significant academic positions. Since Turkey is a secular state, religious women also feel less constrained than women in states where the religious hierarchy rules. The Imam's wife leads a life that is somewhat different from that of an Imam's wife in Iran. Religion governs her moral behavior but does not limit her intellectual pursuits.

Ideas

The voice of women in the Middle East is just beginning to be heard. It is true that through the centuries some women have played significant roles and can be found in the history of each nation. But the voice of the "ordinary" woman has been slower to appear. Now women who have spent their lives in menial tasks are beginning to speak out. Both the readings above look directly at specific women and analyze the role they have played in the society. These kinds of material are available when we look at all the cultures. Students should have the opportunity to hear women's voices. Gender issues should not be given a secondary role in the classroom, especially when we deal with the question of identity. A study of these woman can lead students to interview women in their own experiences—mothers, aunts, grandmothers. These interviews can be tape recorded and an anthology of women's voices can be compiled. A double-entry writing strategy can be employed so students can "write" directly to these women, reflecting on their lives and responding to them.

Bedouin women are very defined by their gender. In the section **Bedouin Women**, the two readings, *Bedouin Blues* and *Analyzing Resistance*, illustrate how Bedouin women very cleverly create an intimate world, a world of women. Many societies have two distinct worlds—the world of men and the world of women. Men and women speak different languages in tonality and choice of words, they speak about different topics and they relate their feelings differently to people of their own sex. Sometimes the structures of the society places a taboo on expressing emotion. Among women they feel no restraints and their poetry reflects little relationship to the everyday activities of their lives. Relationships can be understood on many levels and gender relationships in the Muslim Middle East tend to be formal and hierarchical. In the first reading, we look at poetry as the genre for showing women how to voice their feelings and the poetry of Bedouin women, sometimes immodest, is an outlet for a very limited kind of rebellion. Poetry is their weapon of resistance. They also resist on a daily level by withholding information from men, denying men the right to make marital arrangements for them and singing songs or relating folktales which are really subversive discourses. The passivity of the Muslim women in the Middle East can just be a facade for a strong and independent spirit.

Ideas

It is important for students to understand that women can assert their identity in a subliminal fashion. Professor Abu-Lughod's readings give us entry into that world. This is a contrast to more direct resistance we see among women in less traditional societies. Students can develop a chart of how women resist in traditional and modern societies and then analyze which strategies are effective and which are ineffective. Students can then examine the concept of "a woman's world"—a concept which occurs in Japan, China, South Asia and other parts of the world. Women bonding together create their own world which sustains them economically, socially, politically and emotionally.

Watching the World From Sarah's Loom, another selection from *Lives in an Iranian Village: Women of Deh Koh*, (see *Community* section for reading of same title and teacher strategy) is a wonderful piece about the narrowness and yet the richness of women's lives. Although Sarah does not move her loom from the courtyard, she sees the world through the tales of her visitors, the gossip she receives, the help she is offered and the voices of her close and extended family. Sarah's world is timeless, yet she watches time pass, weaving clothes like women from the time of Penelope. Although she is discarded by her husband, her family took her in. But Sarah was prepared for this eventuality. Her weaving had accrued some small earnings for her and she used those to assert her independence. She would move her world to her son's garden but she would continue to be the center of her world.

Ramza is the story of a rebel, a women who turned away from the requirements of society and married out of choice, even over the strong objections of her father. Ramza was also rebelling against the life of her mother, a woman who had ben abducted as a child and sold to a slave trader and, eventually, sold into a harem in Egypt, the harem where she gave birth to Ramza. Although her father had many wives, he favored Ramza and encouraged her education. Her father, a learned man, was forced to study law by his father and was placed as a translator in the cabinet of the Khedive, the ruler of Egypt. But his European education and his cultured inclinations created a household full of musicians, singers, writers and intellectuals—a household where young Ramza fought to spend her time rather than in the harem. The selection from this memoir by Out El Kouloub, dramatically tells the tale of a brilliant and willful young women who escapes the harem for a very different sort of life.

Ideas

This selection is another example of "women's worlds," in this case, life inside a harem. The harem was a restrictive environment for women and an environment where many women shared one man. It has been "orientalized" in fiction and film but, for women who often felt confined by its rules, it was an environment where women had no choices. When a woman of a higher class does escape the harem, she finds life very different and quite harsh. Students need to explore how each gender is trained for its role, no matter what the society. They can draw upon personal experiences from their own culture which determine how men will behave and how women will behave. They can cite cases of both men and women who broke the patterns and the resulting actions against them. Often men have as few choices as women, though in Middle Eastern material it is the woman who is placed in the harem or purdah and denied opportunities.

Probably the most startling example of women's position in Muslim society is the wearing of the veil. The selection, **The Veiled Revolution**, is an excellent background reading piece for teachers who will need to respond to student's questions and remarks about veiled women. Many women in the Middle East have chosen to wear the veil. The veil has served many functions for women. It is "an outward sign of a complex reality." It is important that teachers familiarize themselves with the history and current revival of the veil and the impact is has on women in the region. It serves many contradictory functions and will continue to be a gender issue for Muslim Middle Eastern women.

As noted above, women speak and write about their most private thoughts and feelings through poetry. Bridal songs, lullabies and the lamentations of women are discussed in **Weavers of the Song: The Oral Poetry of Arab Women in Israel and the West Bank**. These songs (or oral poetry) warn women of some of the issues that can arise between married couples. They praise the beauty of the bride and help assuage some of her nervousness on her wedding night. The lullabies become traditional folk songs and mothers sing the same songs to their children over many generations. The song for the son is particularly poignant because of the special mother/son relationship which exists in the Middle East and in many other traditional societies. Lamentations, the final selections, give us insight into how women deal with loss and how that loss often gives them strength.

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When we examine the gender issue in the larger arena of identity, we often need to look at the traditional tales and how they deal with women. Women can often be portrayed as "man-eaters" or signified by unfriendly or vicious beasts. These tales are told to young children and play a role in determining how they view themselves. The **Maghribine Folktales** are illustrations of this. In the first story, the *ghoulia* can be "daughters of the green serpent." The ghoulia is not a pleasant demon and one needs to develop a defense against their behavior. In this tale, although a women conceives a strategy against the ghoulia, a man (her neighbor) defends her and saves her. The subtheme is apparent. In the second tale of the king's daughter, we see a strong bond between father and daughter. The youngest of his daughters asks for a rose tree when the king leaves for a trip, but the king forgets. On his way home, he realizes his oversight and begins his search. He is dissuaded until one old man assists him in the quest. The story continues with the king returning to his kingdom and jealousy arising among the sisters. In the long run, the youngest sister prevails, emphasizing how a woman's love for a man can give her strength and help her overcome her adversaries.

Ideas

Once again, literature becomes an excellent outlet for women. In interdisciplinary or integrated curriculum models, the social studies teacher can work with the language arts teacher to compile materials and strategies which re-enforce the learnings in the classroom. Literature is an effective topic in the social studies classroom, as is storytelling and poetry reading.

Women are most effected on issues of the family. **Pragmatic Morality: Islam and Family Planning in Morocco**, looks at the world-wide explosive issue of birth control. Islam looks to the Qur'an as well as other religious traditions for some insights into how to deal with this question. However, since there is no definitive point-of-view, family planning becomes a controversial matter. The reading relates the policy statements of two renowned Islamic scholars who openly discuss the issues of family planning, contraception, abortion and adultery.

In another realm, women are affected on the political and economic fronts. **Political Ideology and Women's Economic Participation in Egypt**, analyzes the opportunities for women during the Nasser and Sadat eras in Egypt. In both time frames, women made important political and economic strides through legislation calling for sexual equality in educational opportunity and in the labor field. Women were given the right to vote and hold office. The Sadat era continued these earlier reforms as well as inviting foreign companies to open businesses in Egypt, an opportunity for more women to enter the job market, especially middle and upper class educated women. Some women have taken the opportunity to travel, study and work abroad, and bring back to Egypt their new visions of the larger world. On the personal level, the government has attempted to secularize religious rules, especially those related to divorce and polygamy.

Ideas

Women are intimately affected by the political currents. Although they are the bearers and carers of children, they often do not have decision making power in this area. Students can create a world-wide map, listing some of the major issues which affect women and how each of the regions is dealing with this issue; e.g. rape, contraception, voting, abortion, parliamentary seats, inheritance, child care, adoption, literary, schools, etc. Students will discover a wide discrepancy among regions and nations and it will help them develop less stereotypical attitudes as well as learn to see the world through multiple perspectives.

The final piece, **Masculine Ideology or Feminine Mystique: A Study of Writings on Arab Women**, deals with the issue of whether male writers can effectively speak for women. More enlightened male writers have called for educational opportunities for women even in the 19th century. Some poets even went further and wanted greater freedom for women. But, on the other hand, many critics feel these male writers cannot speak "from" the feminine vantage point. That can only be done by women who have had the feminine experience and speak of that experience, for that experience and from that experience. By the 1950's women writers were beginning to achieve recognition in the Arab world and their works deal with the issue of gender identity in the Muslim Middle East.

Ideas

Are women's writings different from men's writings? Students need to develop a sensitivity to understand if there are differences and, if so, how they show themselves. Many men write *about* women but many women say that only a woman can truly express the women's point-of-view. This argument may appear academic but it is important. Literary examples of how both men and women interpret a situation and write about that experience should be made available to students. This would be an invaluable lesson as students move through different regions of the world, looking at gender issues and concerns.

Appendices

Student Worksheet: Religion

(prepared by Brian P. Kelahan, Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, New York University.)

Directions: For each quotation, indicate which is the appropriate scriptural source by writing one of the letters in the blank.

A. Old Testament **B. New Testament** **C. The Qur'an**

------- 1. O Children of Israel! Call to mind the special favor which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all others.

------- 2. And remember, We delivered you from the people of Pharoah: they set you hard tasks and punishments, slaughtered your sons and let your women live... and remember, We divided the sea for you, saved you and drowned Pharoah's people within your very sight.

------- 3. Say O Muslims: We believe in God and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.

------- 4. Behold! the angels said, "O Mary! God hath chosen thee and purified thee; chosen thee above the women of all nations."

------- 5. And I have come to you to attest the Torah which was before me and to make lawful to you part of what was forbidden to you. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. So fear God, and obey me.

------- 6. Behold! the angels said, "O Mary giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him: his name will be Messiah, Jesus , son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter, and of the company of those nearest to God."

------- 7. She said, "O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?" He said, "Even so, God createth what He will. When He hath decreed a plan, He but Saith to it, 'Be,' and it is."

------- 8. But said the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, "O children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord."

------- 9. But when he came to the fire, a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley, from a tree in hallowed ground, "O Moses! Verily I am God, the Lord of the worlds. Now do thou throw thy rod!" But when he saw it moving of its own accord as if it had been a snake, he turned back in retreat.

------- 10. And We sent Noah and Abraham, and established in their line Prophethood and Revelation; and some of them were on right guidance, but many of them became rebellious transgressors.

Teacher Readings: *Religion*

Islam: A Primer

(Frank E. Peters, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Languages and Literatures, New York University, The Joint Center for Near Eastern Studies of New York University, 1984.)

"Islam" is not, then, a very manageable term. It is a religion, surely, as we understand that word in the West, a complex of beliefs and practices characterized by the same perceptible unity and an equally obvious variety as Judaism and Christianity. It is as well a community sharing that common set of beliefs and practices but cross-cut by ethnic, regional and, more recently, national aspirations. It is finally and gloriously, a civilization, a body of literature, monument, art and thought, urban, bookish, assured and tranquil, which is recognizably "Islamic," at times sharply and obviously, at times dimly but nonetheless surely, from Morocco to Indonesia and beyond.

Muhammad is His Messenger The Veneration of The Prophet in Islamic Piety

(Annemarie Schimmel, *Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of The Prophet in Islamic Piety*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985, pp. 3-4, 6-9, 16, 26, 28-9, 32, 46-8, 55. Reprinted by permission.)

Misunderstanding of the role of the Prophet has been, and still is, one of the greatest obstacles to Christians' appreciation of the Muslim interpretation of Islamic history and culture. For, more than any other historical figure, it was Muhammad who aroused fear, aversion, and hatred in the medieval Christian world...[Yet Muhammad had] enormous influence over the lives [of the people of the region], and the non-Muslim reader will perhaps understand from the witness of theologians and poets, of Arabs, Persians, and Turks, of Muslims in India and in Africa, how deep the Muslims' love for him, how warm their trust in him, how widely he has been venerated and called upon throughout the ages, and how he has been surrounded with the most glorious epithets.

At the moment there are available in Western languages a considerable number of biographies of the Prophet or discussions of his pivotal role in Islamic life and culture that have been written by Muslim authors and hence reflect different approaches to his personality in the Muslim community. However, none of these authors has devoted himself to the study of the area in which love of the Prophet is expressed most beautifully and most eloquently: the poetry of the Islamic peoples. Not only is poetry in the classical languages of Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish worthy of attention here, but even more the popular verses in the various vernacular Islamic languages. These are the poems through which children learn to love the Prophet from early childhood, poems that have helped to form and shape the image of the beloved Prophet, the intercessor on Doomsday and luminous Seal of the Prophets, in the hearts of the Muslim masses.

All will agree that the personality of Muhammad is indeed, besides the Qur'an, the center of the Muslims' life; the Prophet is the one who forever remains the "beautiful model" (Surah 33:21) for the life of all those who acknowledge in the profession of faith that he is truly "the messenger of God." ...The revelations in the later period show Muhammad as the "beautiful model" (*uswa hasana*, Surah 33:21); the faithful are admonished to follow him and imitate his example, for "to obey him means to obey God" (Surah 4:80). The community was also informed that the Prophet was sent *rahmatan lil-'alamin*, "as a Mercy for the worlds" (Surah 21:107), and that God and the angels pronounced the blessing over him (Surah 33:56).

In the understanding of classical Islamic religious theory, Muhammad's legacy consists of his actions, his words and his silent approval of certain facts. Because of the importance of the Prophet's noble example, the science of *hadith* came gradually to occupy a central place in Islamic culture. A *hadith* (narrative, tradition; specifically a Prophetic tradition) is a report that contains a remark about a saying or an action of the Prophet as it is told by one of his trustworthy Companions who relate it to someone in the next generation. Muhammad's Companions are thus the most important source for Prophetic traditions. A *hadith* may treat a ritual problem; it can discuss details of faith and doctrine, tell about the punishment in the next world, or simply describe the Prophet's behavior while offering advice...

Such sessions of *hadith* were days of great importance. For just as the faithful Muslim feels that when reading the Koran or listening to its recitation he is listening to God Himself, he also feels that occupation with Prophetic traditions brings him in close contact with the Prophet, so that, as it were, he sees him and hears his voice. For this reason the teaching of *hadith* was understood as a great responsibility, and the teacher would prepare very carefully for the occasion. He would undertake such teaching of *hadith* with great awe, and only in a state of perfect ritual purity. It is told of Malik ibn Anas (d. 795), the founder of the Malikite school of jurisprudence and one of the great *hadith* transmitters, that "when he intended to sit down to recite *hadith*, he performed the ablution, donned new garments, put on a new turban, took his place on the platform, in awe, reverence, and great seriousness. As long as the lecture continued, incense was constantly burned. His reverence to *hadith* was so great that it happened in one session that a scorpion stung him sixteen times, and he did not show any sign of disturbance."...it was through this imitation of Muhammad's actions as transmitted through the *hadith* that Islamic life assumed a unique uniformity in social behavior, a fact that has always impressed visitors to all parts of the Muslim world.

The Western reader, raised in a centuries-old tradition of aversion to Muhammad, will probably be surprised to learn that in all reports the quality that is particularly emphasized in the Prophet is his humility and kindness. All reports speak of Muhammad's friendly, kindly but serious attitude and point out that he did not often laugh. (One famous Prophetic tradition, frequently quoted by the early ascetics, says: "If you knew what I know you would cry much and laugh little.") However, he is also said to have had a most winning smile that never failed to enchant his followers, and Ghazzali even mentions his tendency to laugh. His softspoken humor is felt from some early Islamic stories, such as the following: "One day a little old woman came to him to ask whether old wretched women would also go to Paradise. 'No,' answered the Prophet, 'there are no old women in Paradise!' And then, looking at her grieved face, he continued with a smile: 'they will all be transformed in Paradise for there, there is only one youthful age for all!'" And his practical wisdom in dealing with his companions is nicely revealed in his remark to Abu Huraira, who had the habit of visiting him too often: *zur ghabban tazdid hubban*, "Visit rarely, then you'll be loved more!"

Muhammad's poverty and the destitute situation of his family members form an essential theme of popular tradition. His bread, it is said, was made from unsifted barley, and some reports describe how he and his family, especially his beloved daughter Fatima, suffered from hunger many a night. In fact, the Prophet always fastened a stone on his stomach to suppress the feeling of hunger, and the misery of Fatima has been told in heartrending stories (mainly in the Shiite tradition).

It is told that someone came to the Prophet and said: "I love you, O Messenger of God!" To which he replied: "Be ready for poverty!" Hence love of the poor became a sign of love for the Prophet: to honor the poor and to associate with them means not only to follow his example but, in a certain sense, to honor him in them. The Prophet's admonition concerning the treatment of slaves—"Let them wear what you wear, and let them eat what you eat"—was quite popular in later centuries, as several anecdotes prove.

The ethical standards that are handed down from him breathe the same spirit as those taught by all great religious leaders. Asked "What is virtue?" he answered: "Ask your heart for a *fatwa* (legal decision). Virtue is when the soul feels peace and the heart feels peace, and sin is what creates restlessness in the soul and rumbles in the bosom." And when asked "What is the best Islam?" he replied: "The best Islam is that you feed the hungry and spread peace among people you know and those you do not know."

The imitation of the noble actions and thoughts that Muhammad, the "beautiful model," had taught his community by his personal example was meant to form each and every Muslim, as it were, into a likeness of the Messenger. This is so that each, like him, should give witness of God's unity through his or her whole being and existence. Therefore, as it is said in the *Dala'il al-khairat*, the pious Muslim should pray: "I ask Thee, O our Lord, to employ us in his [Muhammad's] usages, to cause us to die in his community, to number us in his band, under his banner, and to make us his companions, to supply us from his reservoir, to give us to drink from his cup, and to give us the boon of his love."

Martyrdom

(Muhamud Shahabi, "Shi'I" In K. Morgan, ed., *Islam the Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims*, New York, NY: The Ronald Press Co., John Wiley & Sons,. Inc., 1958. Reprinted by permission.)

During the past decade, the martyrdom of Husayn and the tragedy of Karbala have found greater political significance in the works of Shi'I modernists. Moreover Western scholars and journalists increasingly have interpreted the Shi'I doctrine of martyrdom in political and military terms. The recent decades have witnessed a major transformation in the popular image of Imam Husayn. He is no longer that idol whose jihad was once considered a unique cosmic and a historical event divorced from the socio-political realities of the day like the crucifixion of Jesus. Rather, in the works of the modernists he has become an active revolutionary role-model whose uprising against injustice was a historical event both commencing and setting the example for all battles between good and evil that constitute the dialectics of history.

Much confusion, however, persists regarding the image of Husayn in popular Shi'I culture as well as the extent and nature of the changes that his image has undergone. In this section, Abdulaziz A. Sachedina will elaborate upon the place of martyrdom in Shi'I ethos.

The Imam Husayn's struggle to uphold the spiritual and moral values of Islam becomes comprehensive when seen in the light of the entire struggle of Abrahamic traditions to assert the oneness of God (*tawhid*). In other words, the assertion of monotheism which is pre-eminently attributed to Abraham in the Qur'an (XII: 37-40), calls for the act of submitting to God (*islam*), which means accepting a spiritual and moral responsibility to uphold the standards of action held to have God's authority. Hence, accepting Islam and its challenge meant that Muslims opened themselves to vast new considerations of what life might mean when a person 'submits' to God. So construed, their act of 'submission' could be defined as commitment to the Abrahamic faith enunciated by the Prophet, Muhammad, which required to establishing an intensely creative person as committed to the social and juridical consequences of being a Muslim. Consequently, adherence to Islam presented an opportunity to build a new order of social life such as the Islamic vision had more and more obviously demanded. The 'submission' to God demanded, in the first place, a personal devotion to spiritual and moral purity; but, personal piety and purity implied a just social behaviour. Sooner or later, this challenge of Abrahamic faith was bound to require the creation of a just social order as the natural outgrowth and context of the personal piety and purity *(taqwa)* it required, because Islam is never satisfied with mere exposition of its ideals, but constantly seeks the means to implement them. Obviously, when no Muslim could have remained neutral to this challenge of Islam, how could the Imam Husayn have tolerated a movement spearheaded by the Umayyads which attacked the ideals and principles of Islamic social order and suggested an alternative sort of sanction for their behaviour and especially for social leadership.

It is therefore pertinent to understand the Imam Husayn's revolution within the historical context created by the individual's relationship to God and maintained by the aspirations for the creation of just public order prevalent in the Muslim community as a whole and given form in their corporate life. By regarding the events of Karbala as subordinate, some Muslim scholars, and following them, some Westerners, have-tried to reduce the exceptional significance of the struggle of the Imam Husayn and its impact upon the course of subsequent Islamic history. Undoubtably, without full reference to the general socio-political milieu which developed following the death of the Prophet in the year 632, and which culminated in the events of Karbala, the day of 'Ashura' appears to be a mere tragedy without any meaning and significance for posterity. The Imam Husayn's revolution cannot be isolated from the general historical context of the Islamic challenge within which the Imam and his followers acted to make the purpose of the revolution explicit. In other words, it is impossible to appreciate the purpose behind the Imam Husayn's and his followers' martyrdoms without first understanding the historical circumstances that called upon him to defend the spiritual and moral heritage of Islam.

This is indeed a difficult task, because it is usually considered an impossible undertaking to separate two consecutive events in the history of human society. The explanation of this difficulty lies in the gradual nature of change of factors that demonstrate one historical period from another. Moreover, it is even more difficult to demonstrate the end of one period of a society and the beginning of another when two consecutive periods are required to be examined in order to determine the subsequent changes. It is this difficulty adumbrated in sensitive consequences to one's cherished notions about a particular period in Islamic history, especially the early days following the death of the Prophet, which has caused Muslim scholars in general to deviate from the responsibility of preserving their scholarly integrity in treating the history of the Imam Husayn. Thus the imperative need to properly demarcate the period when the Muslim community began to witness their leaders' obvious deviation from the fundamental teachings of Islam, in order to fully discuss the Imam Husayn's response, has been ignored by many Muslim historians. It is only through objective evaluation of the early period

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of Islamic history that it becomes possible to understand the stance the Imam Husayn took in the year 60-61/679-680. However, for a number of Muslim historians, who have generally failed to point out the obvious deviations from the Islamic revelation in the period that followed the Prophet's death, the challenge lies in revising their tendentious historical presentation of that early period, which has been slow in coming forth. Nevertheless, a consensus among all historians belonging to various schools of Muslim thought has emerged that makes it possible, at least, to fix the period of these deviations from Islamic norms, if not earlier, then, from the beginning of the second half of the period of 'Uthman's caliphate (644-656 A.D.).

'Uthman's caliphate typifies a period that caused general political and religious patterns to drift away from the standards that were provided by Islam. Indeed, it became apparent that the new currents in the Muslim community around this period which went towards creating new forms in the realm of public order were the result of these currents interacting with the mentality of the group that held power in the society, namely, the Umayyads, who had very little concern for the ideals of Islam. As a result, it is not sufficient merely to discuss these new forms at that time by limiting ourselves to the evaluation of the external forms only; rather, it is necessary to embark upon a serious discussion of the factors that created these forms and the way they affected the society and the personages who molded the history of this period. Such inquiry remains legitimate public concern, which puts the event of 'Ashura' in its proper perspective. The main question, then is: What had happened to Islam during this period that the Imam Husayn felt it necessary to take upon himself to undo the harm the Umayyads were causing to it?

Islam conceives of human nature in terms of both its spiritual and physical needs, and as such it is never content with mere exposition of its ideals, but constantly seeks the means to implement them. The Qur'an gave Muslims every reason to wish for a government and a society which would be based on the 'noble paradigm' set by the political and the ideal sides of the Prophet's mission on earth. However, major political undertakings of the early Muslim leaders inevitably demonstrated a lack of commitment to the 'noble paradigm'. Since 'Uthman's time the ruling class had used Islam more or less as a badge of identity. Whereas Islamic ideals carried a responsible and egalitarian social commitment, these rulers were engaged in creating a privileged class of a small elite tied together by common Arab heritage. The implications of such a deviation from the Islamic ideal became discernable to those Muslims who were most serious about the moral and political responsibilities which an acceptance of the Islamic faith entailed. The most obvious implication of reference to the Arabic heritage in ordering public and private life meant that Islam became the envied badge of a favored ruling class of Arabs who happened to be bound together by Islam. As such, that would have made Islam an Ishmaelism (as the Arabs were the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham), analogous to the Israelism of the Jews, in which converts could enter as members of the community only on the basis of their having descended from Abraham. Despite the comprehensiveness of the Islamic ideal and its universalistic direction, the exalting of the Arabs as being of the line of Ishmael and producing an ethnically bound community became part of the political program of the Umayyads from the second half of 'Uthman's caliphate. The most important consequence of this political mission, which gradually became clearer, was that Muslims were not treated on an equal basis as prescribed by the Qur'anic dictum regarding the 'brotherhood of all believers', and the Prophet's recommendation to the Muslims to renounce all conflict based on genealogy. On the contrary, the great families of Medina who descended from the Prophet's close associates were accorded `social priority' *(tafdil)*, and the sense of the inviolability of the Arab tribesmen was reinforced against the Qur'anic requirement that a Muslim, regardless of his ethnic affiliation, had to be accorded that personal liberty and dignity.

Consistent with this anti-egalitarian attitude of the early Muslim leaders was the development of elaborate forms of urban luxury and social distinction. The fruits of conquest, in the form of the booty and the revenue from the conquered lands, had created an unequal distribution of wealth among all Arab Muslims. Consequently, the wealth was concentrated among the conquering families, affording them privileges based on arbitrary distinctions of rank. According to al-Zahabi, during 'Uthman's reign there was so much wealth in Medina that a horse would sell for one-hundred thousand dirhams, while a garden would fetch four-hundred thousand. The Umayyads, says al-Zahabi, had, during this period, acted indiscriminately in amassing wealth to the extent that they had discredited the caliphate as the guarantor of the equality of all Muslims in sharing the wealth acquired through the spoils and the taxes from the conquered lands. Mu'awiyah, who symbolizes the prevailing tendencies of the Arab aristocracy in the first century of Islam, clearly formed his policies as the Arab chief, concerned perhaps less with the directives of the Qur'an or the Prophetic 'pattern of moral behavior'—the *sunnah*. It can be maintained with much documentation that the Umayyad rulers did the minimum for the consolidation of Islamic matters. The Umayyad rulers and their governors— who were by and large neither pious nor committed to Islam—were not the people to promote a religious and social life corresponding to the *sunnah* of the Prophet. As a matter of fact, reference to the *sunnah* was not necessarily a reference to the *sunnah* of the Prophet; rather, Mu'awiyah made frequent references to the *sunnah* of 'Umar in setting the fiscal policies of the state. There was little concern about the religious life of the population. As true Arabs, they paid little attention to religion, either in their own conduct or in that of their subjects. If a man was observant of his religious obligation and was seen to be devoutly worshiping in the mosque, it was assumed that he was not a follower of the Umayyad dynasty, but an ardent supporter of 'Ali.

Individual examples cited by several authoritative traditionists indicate the state of affairs in regard to the ignorance prevailing among the Umayyads about the ritual performances and religious precepts in the first century. In Syria, where the Umayyads had the staunchest support, it was not generally known that there were only five canonical daily prayers, and in order to make certain of this fact, it was decided that an associate of the Prophet who was still alive should be asked about it. It is impossible to fully comprehend the state of affairs that prevailed under the Umayyads when the rulers of the people who lived under them showed very little concern for the understanding of the laws and rules of Islam. Indeed, such a period was alluded to in the Prophetic tradition which predicted the critical religious future of the Muslim community:

> *'There will come rulers after me who will destroy the canonical prayers (salat) but continue to perform the prayers at the fixed times all the same.'*

Moreover, the Umayyad hatred of the Hashemites, especially the Prophet's family, which was evident under Mu'awiyah and his successors, gave rise to controversies among Muslims on issues of Islam, whether political or doctrinal. The Umayyad spirit of fabrication, dissemination, and suppression of Prophetic traditions is evident in the instruction which Mu'awiyah gave to his governor al-Mughirah on defaming 'Ali and his companions:

> *'Do not tire of abusing and insulting 'Ali and calling for God's mercifulness for 'Uthman, defaming the companions of 'Ali, removing them, and refusing to listen to them; praising, in contrast, the clan of 'Uthman, drawing them near to you, and listening to them'.*

This instruction is in the form of official encouragement to fabricate lies directed against 'Ali and to hold back and suppress those reports that favored him. Evidently the Umayyads and their political followers had no scruples in promoting tendentious lies in the form of Prophetic traditions, and they were prepared to cover such falsifications with their undoubted authority.

One such pious authority was al-Zuhri, who could not resist pressure from the governing authorities, and was willing to promote the interests of the Umayyad dynasty by religious means. Al-Zuhri belonged to the circle of those Muslims who believed that a *modus vivendi* with the Umayyad government was desirable. However, even he could not cover up the report that Anas ibn Malik had related regarding the critical religious situation under the Umayyads. The report is preserved in al-Bukhari in his *Sahih*, in a section entitled: 'Not offering the prayer at its stated time':

> *'Al-Zuhri relates that he visited Anas ibn Malik at Damascus and found him weeping, and asked him the reason for his weeping. He replied 'I do not know anything which I used to know during the lifetime of the Messenger of God. [Everything is lost] except this prayer (salat) which [too] is being lost [that is, not being offered as it should be].'*

That the manner in which this well-established Prophetic practice of prayer had been altered, either out of ignorance or due to the *anti-sunna* and anti-'Ali attitude of the Umayyads, is further demonstrated by another tradition in al-Bukhari, in the section entitled: 'To end the *takbir* [the saying of 'God is greater'] on prostrating.' The tradition is narrated on the authority of Mutarrif ibn 'Abdullah, who said:

> "'Imran ibn Husayn and I offered the prayer behind 'Ali ibn Abi Talib [in Basra]. When 'Ali prostrated, he said the takbir; when he raised his head he said the takbir and when he stood up for the third unit (rak'a) he said the takbir. On the completion of the prayer 'Imram took my hand and said: He ['Ali] made me remember the prayer of Muhammad, peace be upon him. Or, he said [something to the effect that] He led us in a prayer like that of Muhammad, peace be upon him.'

The above facts show sufficiently the prevailing trend in the Umayyad state, where Islam was above all a badge of united Arab aristocracy, the cold and discipline of a conquering elite. As became apparent in subsequent periods, the traditions of Arab aristocracy had relatively little inherent connection with Islam itself. In fact, under the Umayyads a responsible and egalitarian spirit of Islam was ignored in favor of power politics. Under such circumstances, the faithful had to deal with a crucial moral and religious question: To what extent could the Muslims consent to obey the rulers, who were completely opposed to the basic teachings of Islam?

It is possible to surmise from various sources on this period of Islamic history that the Umayyads presented a dilemma for the committed Muslims as to how they were to order their religious life under such rulers. Of course, there were some, like al-Zuhri, who did not consider the deviation from the religious obligations by the Umayyads as sufficient reason to refuse obedience to them and declare them as unjust. These were the Marjacites, who believed that to acknowledge the Umayyads as true believers it was sufficient that they professed Islam outwardly, and that it was not necessary to pry into their un-Islamic behaviour. Accordingly, these people did not raise any objection to the cruel measures adopted by the Umayyads and their governors against those pious individuals like Hujr ibn `Adi and later on, the Imam Husayn, who refused them their allegiance on the basis of their conviction that as an essential consequence of their religious responsibility they could not do so. On the contrary, the Marja'ites even defended the massacres which the Umayyads caused among their most pious opponents on the grounds that these individuals were disrupting the unity of the community by challenging the authority that represented the Muslim community as a whole.

There were others among the pious persons, who, although acknowledging the unworthiness of the Umayyads to rule the community on religious grounds, maintained that the *de facto* rule of the Umayyads was in the interest of the state and of Islamic unity. They thereby contributed towards the acceptance of the rulers, and the people, following their lead, tolerated and paid allegiance to the un-Islamic regime. Furthermore, the accommodating outlook of this group laid the groundwork for the acceptance of any claim to legitimacy by a Muslim authority that managed to successfully seize power through upheaval or revolution.

On the other hand, we have persons like the Imam Husayn, who refused to acknowledge these corrupt leaders and their representatives at all, and met them with resistance. As such, the Imam Husayn and his followers provide a clear contrast to accommodation to Umayyad policies. The Imam Husayn's unbending religious attitude stems from his conviction about the political responsibilities which an acceptance of Islamic revelation entailed. In his letter to the people of Kufah, who had urged him to come to Iraq to assume the responsibilities of an *imam*, he reaffirms his penetrating awareness of religio-political responsibilities of the Imam. He says:

> *'I solemnly declare that a person is not the imam if he does not act in accordance with the Book [of God], and does not follow justice [in dealing with the people], and is not subject to the Truth, and does not devote himself entirely to God.'*

Undoubtedly, one can discern the implication of the above statement in the Imam Husayn's declaration, made in a speech to the army of Hurr, who had come to intercept him on his way to Iraq. This declaration shows the disgust of the pious with the life lived under the ungodly Umayyads:

> *'Do you not see that truth is not followed anymore, and that falsehood is not being interdicted [by anyone]? Indeed, it is within the right of a believer to desire to meet God. Verily, I do not see death except [in the form of] martyrdom; and I do not see life with the unjust as anything but loathsome.'*

It is evident that the Imam Husayn was reacting to the general condition of deterioration in the upholding of the Islamic teaching brought about by the anti-religious Umayyads and the prevailing outlook of accommodation among the Muslims encouraged by those theologians who supported the existing order and wanted to prevent civil strife at the expense of the Qur'anic principle of justice. Thus, the events of the year 61/680 become comprehensible when seen in light of the Qur'anic insistence on the establishment of a just social order under the guidance provided by God in the form of the Book and the 'noble paradigm' of the Prophet, and the manner in which the representatives of the Muslim community deviated from this goal following the death of the Prophet. Moreover, it was the commitment to the ideals of Islam that finally decided the course adopted by the Imam Husayn and his followers in Karbala on the day of *`Ashura'*—a day which continues and will continue to challenge our conceptions of standards of human respect and recognition for as long as there remains a conscientious being on earth. It is, I believe, the message of Truth and Justice—the Islamic revelation in its entirety—that makes the study and the commemoration of the Imam Husayn's martyrdom deserving of our wonder and our tears. In Islamic history there is no other occasion which can generate the total responsibility that a Muslim has towards God and his fellow men. Furthermore, there is no other 'paradigm' that equals the paradigm provided by all the members of the Prophet's family in creating an egalitarian social commitment, which Islam obviously demands from its adherents. It is this paradigmatic nature of the Imam

Husayn's life that gives it an eternal meaning, promised in the Qur'an, to all those who struggle and sacrifice their lives in the cause of God: *Count not those who are slain in God's way as dead, but rather as living with their Lord, by Him provided.* (111: 169).

Teacher Readings: *Community*

Distant View of a Minaret

(Alifa Rifaat. Denys Johnson-Davies, trans., *Distant View of a Minaret*, London, England: Heinemann, 1983, pp.107-112.)

The Kite

Rubbing the sleep from her eyes Widad got up from the mattress in the corner of the one room that made up the house and which, during her husband's lifetime, had served for the two of them in addition to their numerous children. Now for some years she had it to herself and had become accustomed to the silence that reigned over it and the dull routine that was her daily life. She smiled as she heard the cockerels, her own and those of her neighbors, greeting the first light of day and almost drowning the voice of the *muezzin* as he called to dawn prayers.

Her first thoughts were of her chickens that would be waiting for her to let them out of their coop into the courtyard alongside the house. Years ago she had made the coop with her own hands out of mud and reeds, with straw on the floor for them to lay their eggs on. In those days the chickens had helped to provide for the needs of the children, especially as her husband Ahmed's health had been deteriorating and he had been able to do less and less work as an agricultural laborer. Now the chickens were not only her support in life but gave it a flavor and a meaning.

She went to the water-pump that stood in the corner of the courtyard, working it with her left hand and spattering the water over her face and neck with the other. All this while the screeching from the coop grew more and more insistent. "I'm coming, I'm coming," she called out. "Just have a little patience." She walked across the courtyard and moved aside with her foot the stone that kept the wire-netting door shut and two large cockerels strutted out, followed by the harem of hens over which they were continually fighting. Widad laughed with pleasure and pride as the chickens scattered over the courtyard. She knew each one of them and its particular characteristics and would carry on long conversations with them.

She looked up at the cloudless sky that told of a day of extreme heat. She screwed up her eyes and looked beyond the mud wall that bounded the courtyard towards the dark forms of the tall date-palms and eucalyptus trees marking the river bank beyond the bright green of the fields that stretched to the water's edge. From afar came the painful groaning of a water-wheel being turned by a blindfolded water-buffalo.

She went back into the house and brought out a palm-branch cage; she took it to the courtyard and raised the little door and an army of chicks jostled to get through the narrow opening and join the chickens. Then she took from the coop a heavy earthenware bowl, threw to one side the water that remained and, rinsing it at the pump, refilled it and put it down in a corner of the courtyard where, in an hour or two when the sun had made a part of its journey across the sky, there would be an area of shade. And so, pursuing the strict routine she had set herself these last few years, she went back into the house to prepare the mixture of bran and curdled milk. As she appeared with the full bowl the chickens flocked round her and she scooped up the moist bran in her fingers and threw it down around her. As she scooped the last handful from the bowl she saw with annoyance some of her neighbors' pigeons flutter down amidst her chickens.

Only now did she prepare her own breakfast: a glass of strong, heavily-sugared tea and some pieces of bread and a small bowl of whey. She carried them on a tray and sat down by the coop where she ate and sipped at the tea, deriving a deep-seated sense of security from watching her chickens pecking about in the earth in their never-ending search for things to eat. It was this time at the beginning of the day that she loved most, when man starts his struggle for his daily bread, and the animals and plants join with him in the renewal of God's miracle of creation. She looked around at her small tribe of chickens of which she was in charge and raised her hand to her lips, kissing it back and front in thanks for His generosity.

She regretted that it was only through such gestures and the uttering of a few simple supplications that she was able to render her thanks to her Maker. During Ahmed's lifetime she would stand behind him as he performed the prayers, following his movements as he bowed down and then prostrated himself, listening reverently to the words he recited and knowing that he who stands behind the man leading prayers and follows his movements has himself performed the prayers. Ahmed had often tried to make her memorize some verses of the Qur'an but she had never succeeded in doing so, and thus, with his death, she had given up performing the regular prayers and was too shy to ask one of the neighbors if she could join his family in their prayers.

The voice of the *muezzin* broke the silence as he gave the call to noon prayers. She rose to her feet and said "Allah is great and to Allah be praise", then called 'kutkutkutkutkut' and the chicks hurried along to her and she collected them up and placed them back in their cage,

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taking it into the house with her, out of the harsh rays of the midday sun, and sprinkled it with water.

She swept the room, then sat down on the ground and gripped the grinder between her thighs, turning the handle and feeding it grains of maize for her chickens' evening meal. Then she boiled two eggs for herself, which she ate with two rounds of bread and an onion, after which she lay down beside the cage with her arm under her head, and before sleep overcame her she heard the call to afternoon prayers.

She was roused from sleep by the chirping of her chicks, and she took up the cage and went outside. She released them again, assured that the sun's golden disk had now lost its power to damage them and had grown a darker orange color, preparatory to the blood redness of its daily expiry.

She worked the water-pump and washed the sweat from her face, neck and arms, then raised each foot under the jet of water and returned to the house. She brewed up some tea and placed a glass and the tin of sugar on a tray and took them with her through the courtyard to the door that led to the narrow alleyway passing between the closely-packed houses. There, on the raised stone bench beside her house, she sat down to watch the village life pass by. It was the only time of the day when she was in touch with the outside world: men passing, their hoes resting on their shoulders; women in groups, interrupting their chatter to say a word of greeting to her; some children, playing and chasing after each other, the ends of their *galabias* held between their teeth; and animals being led to the canal to be immersed in its cool waters after the heat of the day.

Suddenly she became aware of a man standing by her. She first saw his splayed, cracked feet, then his large hands with the protuberant veins held at his side, then the broad shoulders from which the *galabia* hung down, and the strong, sharp features that still retained vestiges of that handsomeness that had attracted her to him so many years ago.

"Greetings to you, Widad. I hope you're keeping well."

"Mitwalli?"

Before he replied she had drawn the end of her head-veil in an automatic gesture over her face. Mitwalli had been her childhood sweetheart, yet though each knew of the feelings of the other they had never once exchanged a word. She had presumed that one day he'd go to her father and ask for her hand. However, her father had married her to Ahmed and she had not dared to object. Later Mitwalli had married Nabawiyya, the daughter of Hagg Kattab. During the years she had borne her children, some of whom had lived and others died, and from time to time she would hear news of Mitwalli: that he had a second son, or that his daughter had married, or that his father had died and left him nearly *a feddan* of good land. It was in the same year his father had died that her husband Ahmed had succumbed to the bilharzia from which he had been suffering all his life. At the time people whispered among themselves that maybe Mitwalli would take her as a second wife now that she was free, but she had silenced such tongues by announcing that she would not think of marrying again and that she would live the rest of her life bringing up her children; besides, she could not accept the idea of sharing a husband with another woman. Now, some months back, Nabawiyya had died.

She knew at once why he had come and for a moment she felt breathless with excitement. She had thought of this possibility ever since she had learnt of the death of his wife, but she had rejected it, telling herself that she had grown used to living on her own. She lowered her head-veil and looked up at him boldly and it was he who looked away.

"I've been wanting to talk to you for some time, Widad," he said in a low voice. "You know, Widad, the fact is ..."

"Sit down, Mitwalli, and have a glass of tea."

He seated himself on the edge of the stone bench and she poured him out the tea in her empty glass. She added some sugar and passed him the glass. For some time he went on stirring the tea in silence then said in the same low voice:

"You know, Widad, that my wife, the mother of my children, died and I'm on my own. And you know I've always loved you and wanted you . . ."

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "Have some shame, man! Have you come to tell me things you should have said thirty years ago? Why didn't you go to my father at the time? You come talking of love when I've got one foot on the ground and one in the grave?"

He sipped at the tea slowly, shifting his feet as though about to leave.

"And do you think I'm any younger, Widad? I'm still five years older than you like before. It was you I always wanted but it wasn't possible at the time. After all, it's not as if we've got anything to lose. The past is over and done with. Or does it mean that just because we've grown old we've not got the right to live the rest of our lives like other people? Anyway, I'll pass by tomorrow at the same time and you think about it in the meantime."

Though she shook her head at him, a great sadness took hold of her as she watched those large feet turn away and walk off. She thought with pain of how her life might have been had she married Mitwalli instead of Ahmed, but there is a time for everything: a time for romantic dreams, and a time for marriage and child-bearing, and a time when God has decreed that you are left alone in this world in order to prepare yourself for leaving it.

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She took up the tray and stood in the doorway to the courtyard and watched the two cockerels squabbling over the ownership of a worm. Suddenly a kite swooped down by the chicken coop on the far side, then flew off with a chick between its claws. The chickens were momentarily struck motionless by this event, then continued their normal activities as though nothing had happened. As for her, the loss of the chick clouded out every other thought from her mind. What would prevent the kite from coming again?

Hurriedly she gathered up the chickens into the coop and the chicks into their cage.

Sleep did not come to her till far into the night as she tossed and turned and worried about her chickens. Just before sleep finally lay down on her eyelids there came to her the specter of the tall, gaunt figure of Mitwalli standing in the courtyard with arms outstretched, like a scarecrow protecting her chickens. "And why not?" she asked herself.

In a short dream before she awoke to the call to dawn prayers she saw herself standing behind Mitwalli and following his movements as he prayed, and her heart stirred with a feeling of contentment.

The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid

(by Tayeb Salih, *The Wedding of Zein*, Denys Johnson-Davis, trans., London, England: Heinemann, 1968, pp.1-20.)

Were you to come to our village as a tourist, it is likely, my son, that you would not stay long. If it were in winter time, when the palm trees are pollinated, you would find that a dark cloud had descended over the village. This, my son, would not be dust, nor yet that mist which rises up after rainfall. It would be a swarm of those sand-flies which obstruct all paths to those who wish to enter our village. Maybe you have seen this pest before, but I swear that you have never seen this particular species. Take this gauze netting, my son, and put it over your head. While it won't protect you against these devils, it will at least help you to bear them. I remember a friend of my son's, a fellow student at school, whom my son invited to stay with us a year ago at this time of the year. His people come from the town. He stayed one night with us and got up next day, feverish, with a running nose and swollen face; he swore that he wouldn't spend another night with us.

If you were to come to us in summer—you would find the horse-flies with us—enormous flies the size of young sheep, as we say. In comparison to these the sand-flies are a thousand times more bearable. They are savage flies, my son: they bite, sting, buzz, and whirr. They have a special love for man and no sooner smell him out than they attach themselves to him. Wave them-off you, my son—God curse all sand-flies.

And were you to come at a time which was neither summer nor winter you would find nothing at all. No doubt, my son, you read the papers daily, listen to the radio, and go to the cinema once or twice a week. Should you become ill you have the right to be treated in hospital, and if you have a son he is entitled to receive education at a school. I know, my son, that you hate dark secrets and like to see electric light shining out into the night. I know, too, that you are not enamored of walking and that riding donkeys gives you a bruise on your backside. Oh, I wish, my son, I wish—the asphalted roads of the towns the modern means of transport the fine comfortable buses. We have none of all this—we are people who live on what God sees fit to give us.

Tomorrow you will depart from our village, of this I am sure, and you will be right to do so. What have you to do with such hardship? We are thick-skinned people and in this we differ from others. We have become used to this hard life, in fact we like it, but we ask no one to subject himself to the difficulties of our life. Tomorrow you will depart, my son—I know that. Before you leave, though, let me show you one thing—something which, in a manner of speaking, we are proud of. In the towns you have museums, places in which the local history and the great deeds of the past are preserved. This thing that I want to show you can be said to be a museum. It is one thing we insist our visitors should see.

Once a preacher, sent by the government, came to us to stay for a month. He arrived at a time when the horse-flies had never been fatter. On the very first day the man's face swelled up. He bore this manfully and joined us in evening prayers on the second night, and after prayers he talked to us of the delights of the primitive life. On the third day he was down with malaria, he contracted dysentery, and his eyes were completely gummed up. I visited him at noon and found him prostrate in bed, with a boy standing at his head waving away the flies.

"O Sheikh," I said to him, "there is nothing in our village to show you, though I would like you to see the doum tree of Wad Hamid." He didn't ask me what Wad Hamid's doum tree was, but I presumed that he had heard of it, for who has not? He raised his face which was like the lung of a slaughtered cow; his eyes (as I said) were firmly closed; though I knew that behind the lashes there lurked a certain bitterness.

"By God," he said to me, "if this were the Doum tree of Jandal, and you the Moslems who fought with Ali and Mu'awiya, and I the arbitrator between you, holding your fate in these two hands of mine, I would not stir an inch!" and he spat upon the ground as though to curse me and turned his face away. After that we heard that the Sheikh had cabled to those who had sent him, saying: "The horse-flies have eaten into my neck, malaria has burnt up my skin, and dysentery has lodged itself in my bowels. Come to my rescue, may God bless you— these are people who are in no need of me or of any other preacher." And so the man departed and the government sent us no preacher after him.

But, my son, our village actually witnessed many great men of power and influence, people with names that rang through the country like drums, whom we never even dreamed would ever come here—they came, by God, in droves.

We have arrived. Have patience, my son; in a little while there will be the noonday breeze to lighten the agony of this pest upon your face.

Here it is: the doum tree of Wad Hamid. Look how it holds its head aloft to the skies; look how its roots strike down into the earth; look at its full, sturdy trunk, like the form of a comely woman, at the branches on high resembling the mane of a frolicsome steed! In the afternoon, when the sun is low, the doum tree casts its shadow from this high mound right across the river so that someone sitting on the far bank can rest in its shade. At dawn, when the sun rises, the shadow of the tree stretches across the cultivated land and houses right up to the cemetery. Don't you think it is like some mythical eagle spreading its wings over the village and everyone in it? Once the government, wanting to put through an agricultural scheme, decided to cut it down: they said that the best place for setting up the pump was where the doum tree stood. As you can see, the people of our village are concerned solely with their everyday needs and I cannot remember their ever having rebelled against anything. However, when they heard about cutting down the doum tree they all rose up as one man and barred the district commissioner's way. That was in the time of foreign rule. the flies assisted them too—the horse-flies. The man was surrounded by the clamoring people shouting that if the doum tree were cut down they would fight the government to the last man, while the flies played havoc with the man's face. As his papers were scattered in the water we heard him cry out: " All right—doum tree stay— scheme no stay!" And so neither the pump nor the scheme came about and we kept our doum tree.

Let us go home, my son, for this is no time for talking in the open. This hour just before sunset is a time when the army of sand-flies becomes particularly active before going to sleep. At such a time no one who isn't well-accustomed to them and has become as thick-skinned as we are can bear their stings. Look at it, my son, look at the doum tree: lofty, proud, and haughty as though—as though it were some ancient idol. Whenever you happen to be in the village you can see it; in fact, you can even see it from four villages away.

Tomorrow you will depart from our village, of that there is no doubt, the mementoes of the short walk we have taken visible upon your face, neck and hands. But before you leave I shall finish the story of the tree, the doum tree of Wad Hamid. Come in, my son, treat this house as your own.

You ask who planted the doum tree?

No one planted it, my son. Is the ground in which it grows arable land? Do you not see that it is stony and appreciably higher than the river bank, like the pedestal of a statue, while the river twists and turns below it like a sacred snake, one of the ancient gods of the Egyptians? My son, no one planted it. Drink your tea, for you must be in need of it after the trying experience you have undergone. Most probably it grew up by itself, though no one remembers having known it other than as you now find it. Our sons opened their eyes to find it commanding the village. And we, when we take ourselves back to childhood memories, to that dividing line beyond which you remember nothing, see in our minds a giant doum tree standing on a river bank; everything beyond it is as cryptic as talismans, like the boundary between day and night, like that fading light which is not the dawn but the light directly preceding the break of day. My son, do you find that you can follow what I say? Are you aware of this feeling I have within me but which I am powerless to express? Every new generation finds the doum tree as though it had been born at the time of their birth and would grow up with them. Go and sit with the people of this village and listen to them recounting their dreams. A man awakens from sleep and tells his neighbor how he found himself in a vast sandy tract of land, the sand as white as pure silver; how his feet sank in as he walked so that he could only draw them out again with difficulty; how he walked and walked until he was overcome with thirst and stricken with hunger, while the sands stretched endlessly around him; how he climbed a hill and on reaching the top espied a dense forest of doum trees with a single tall tree in the center which in comparison with the other looked like a camel amid a herd of goats; how the man went down the hill to find that the earth seemed to be rolled up before him so that it was but a few steps before he found himself under the doum tree of Wad Hamid how he then discovered a vessel containing milk, its surface still fresh with froth, and how the milk did not go down though he drank until he had quenched his thirst. At which his neighbor says to him, "Rejoice at release from your troubles."

You can also hear one of the women telling her friend: "It was as though I were in a boat sailing through a channel in the sea, so narrow that I could stretch out my hands and touch the shore on either side. I found myself on the crest of a mountainous wave which carried me upwards till I was almost touching the clouds, then bore me down into a dark, bottomless pit. I began shouting in my fear, but my voice seemed to be trapped in my throat. Suddenly I found the channel opening out a little. I saw that on the two shores were black, leafless trees with thorns, the tips of which were like the heads of hawks. I saw the two shores closing in upon me and the trees seemed to be walking towards me. I was filled with terror and called out at the top of my voice, "O Wad Hamid!" As I looked I saw a man with a radiant face and a heavy white beard flowing down over his chest, dressed in spotless white and holding a string of amber prayer-beads. Placing his hand on my brow he said: "Be not afraid," and I was calmed. Then I found the shore opening up and the water flowing gently. I looked to my left and saw fields of ripe corn, water-wheels turning, and cattle grazing, and on the shore stood the doum tree of Wad Hamid. The boat came to rest under the tree and the man got out, tied up the boat, and stretched out his hand to me. He then struck me gently on the shoulder with the string of beads, picked up a doum fruit from the ground and put it in my hand. When I turned round he was no longer there.

"That was Wad Hamid," her friend then says to her, "you will have an illness that will bring you to the brink of death, but you will recover. You must make an offering to Wad Hamid under the doum tree."

So it is, my son, that there is not a man or woman, young or old, who dreams at night without seeing the doum tree of Wad Hamid at some point in the dream.

You ask me why it was called the doum tree of Wad Hamid and who Wad Hamid was. Be patient, my son—have another cup of tea.

At the beginning of home rule a civil servant came to inform us that the government was intending to set up a stopping place for the steamer. He told us that the national government wished to help us and to see us progress, and his face was radiant with enthusiasm as he talked. But he could see that the faces around him expressed no reaction. My son, we are not people who travel very much, and when we wish to do so for some important matter such as registering land, or seeking advice about a matter of divorce, we take a morning's ride on our donkeys and then board the Steamer from the neighboring village. My son, we have grown accustomed to this, in fact it is precisely for this reason that we breed donkeys. It is little wonder, then, that the government official could see nothing in the people's faces to indicate that they were pleased with the news. His enthusiasm waned and, being at his wit's end, he began to fumble for words.

"Where will the stopping-place be?" someone asked him after a period of silence. The official replied that there was only one suitable place—where the doum tree stood. Had you that instant brought along a woman and had her stand among those men as naked as the day her mother bore her, they could not have been more astonished.

"The steamer usually passes here on a Wednesday," one of the men quickly replied; "if you made a stopping-place, then it would be here on Wednesday afternoon." The official replied that the time fixed for the steamer to stop by their village would be four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon.

"But that is the time when we visit the tomb of Wad Hamid at the doum tree," answered the man; "when we take our women and children and make offerings. We do this every week." The official laughed. "Then change the day!" he replied. Had the official told these men at that moment that every one of them was a bastard, that would not have angered them more than this remark of his. They rose up as one man, bore down upon him, and would certainly have killed him if I had not intervened and snatched him from their clutches. I then put him on a donkey and told him to make good his escape.

And so it was that the steamer still does not stop here and that we still ride off on our donkeys for a while morning and take the steamer from the neighboring village when circumstances require us to travel. We content ourselves with the thought that we visit the tomb of Wad Hamid with our women and children and that we make offerings there every Wednesday as our fathers and fathers' fathers did before us.

Excuse me, my son, while I perform the sunset prayer—it is said that the sunset prayer is 'strange': if you don't catch it in time it eludes you. God's servant - I declare that there is no god but God and I declare that Muhammad is His Servant and His Prophet—Peace be upon you and the mercy of God!

Ah, ah. For a week this back of mine has been giving me pain. What do you think it is, my son? I know, though—it's just old age. Oh to be young! In my young days I would breakfast off half a sheep, drink the milk of five cows for supper, and be able to lift a sack of dates with one hand. He lies who says he ever beat me at wrestling. They used to call me 'the crocodile'. Once I swam the river, using my chest to push a boat loaded with wheat to the other shore at night! On the shore were some men at work at their water-wheels, who threw down their clothes in terror and fled when they saw me pushing the boat towards them.

"Oh people," I shouted at them, "what's wrong, shame upon you! Don't you know me? I'm 'the crocodile'. By God, the devils themselves would be scared off by your ugly faces."

My son, have you asked me what we do when we're ill?

I laugh because I know what's going on in your head. You townsfolk hurry to the hospital on the slightest pretext. If one of you hurts his finger you dash off to the doctor who puts a bandage on and you carry it in a sling for days; and even then it doesn't get better. Once I was working in the fields and something hit my finger—this little finger of mine. I jumped to my feet and looked around in the grass where I found a snake lurking. I swear to you it was longer than my arm. I took hold of it by the head and crushed it between two fingers, then bit into my finger, sucked out the blood, and took up a handful of dust and rubbed it on the bite.

But that was only a little thing. What do we do when faced with real illness?

This neighbor of ours, now. One day her neck swelled up and she was confined to bed for two months. One night she had a heavy fever, so at first dawn she rose from her bed and dragged herself along till she came yes, my son, till she came to the doum tree of Wad Hamid. The woman told us what happened.

"I was under the doum tree," she said, "with hardly sufficient strength to stand up, and called out at the top of my voice: "O Wad Hamid, I have come to you to seek refuge and protection—I shall sleep here at your tomb and under your doum tree. Either you let me die or you restore me to life; I shall not leave here until one of these two things happens."

"And so I curled myself up in fear," the woman continued with her story, "and was soon overcome by sleep. While midway between wakefulness and sleep I suddenly heard sounds of recitation from the Koran and a bright light, as sharp as a knife-edge, radiated out, joining up the two river banks, and I saw the doum tree prostrating itself in worship. My heart throbbed so violently that I thought it would leap up through my mouth. I saw a venerable old man with a white beard and wearing a spotless white robe come up to me, a smile on his face. He struck me on the head with his string of prayer beads and called out: "Arise."

I swear that I got up I know not how and went home I know not how. I arrived back at dawn and woke up my husband, my son, and my daughters. I told my husband to light the fire and make tea. Then I ordered my daughters to give trilling cries of joy, and the whole village prostrated themselves before us. I swear that I have never again been afraid, nor yet ill."

Yes, my son, we are people who have no experience of hospitals. In small matters such as the bites of scorpions, fever, sprains, and fractures, we take to our beds until we are cured. When in serious trouble we go to the doum tree.

Shall I tell you the story of Wad Hamid, my son, or would you like to sleep? Townsfolk don't go to sleep till late at night—I know that of them. We, though, go to sleep directly the birds are silent, the flies stop harrying the cattle, the leaves of the trees settle down, the hens spread their wings over their chicks, and the goats turn on their sides to chew the cud. We and our animals are alike: we rise in the morning when they rise and go to sleep when they sleep, our breathing and theirs following one and the same pattern.

My father, reporting what my grandfather had told him, said: "Wad Hamid, in times gone by, used to be the slave of a wicked man. He was one of God's holy saints but kept his faith to himself, not daring to pray openly lest his wicked master should kill him. When he could no longer bear his life with this infidel he called upon God to deliver him and a voice told him to spread his prayer-mat on the water and that when it stopped by the shore he should descend. The prayer-mat put him down at the place where the doum tree is now and which used to be waste land. And there he stayed alone, praying the whole day. At nightfall a man came to him with dishes of food, so he ate and continued his worship till dawn."

All this happened before the village was built up. It is as though this village with its inhabitants, its water-wheels and buildings, had become split off from the earth. Anyone who tells you he knows the history of its origin is a liar. Other places begin by being small and then grow larger, but this village of ours came into being at one bound. Its population neither increases nor decreases, while its appearance remains unchanged. And ever since our village has existed, so has the doum tree of Wad Hamid; and just as no one remembers how it originated and grew, so no one remembers how the doum tree came to grow in a patch of rocky ground by the river standing above it like a sentinel.

When I took you to visit the tree, my son, do you remember the iron railing round it? Do you remember the marble plaque standing on a stone pedestal with 'The doum tree of Wad Hamid' written on it? Do you remember the doum tree with the gilded crescents above the tomb? They are the only new things about the village since God first planted it here, and I shall now recount to you how they came into being.

When you leave us tomorrow—and you will certainly do so, swollen of face and inflamed of eye—it will be fitting if you do not curse us but rather think kindly of us and of things that I have told you this night, for you may well find that your visit to us was not wholly bad.

You remember that some years ago we had Members of Parliament and political parties and a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing which we couldn't make head or tail of. The roads would sometimes cast down strangers at our very doors, just as the waves of the sea wash up strange weeds. Though not a single one of them prolonged his stay beyond one night, they would nevertheless bring us the news of the great fuss going on in the capital. One day they told us that the government which had driven out imperialism had been substituted by an even bigger and noisier government.

"And who has changed it?" we asked them, but received no answer. As for us, ever since we refused to allow the stopping place to be set up at the doum tree no one has disturbed our tranquil existence. Two years passed without our knowing what form the government had taken, black or white. Its emissaries passed through our village without staying in it, while we thanked God that He had saved us the trouble of putting them up. So things went on till, four years ago, a new government came in to power. As though this new authority wished to make us conscious of its presence, we awoke one day to find an official with an enormous hat and small head, in the company of two soldiers, measuring up and doing calculations at the doum tree. We asked them what it was about, to which they replied that the government wished to build a stopping-place for the steamer under the doum tree.

"But we have already given you our answer about that," we told them. "What makes you think we'll accept it now?"

"The government which gave in to you was a weak one," they said, "but the position has now changed."

To cut a long story short, we took them by the scruffs of their necks, hurled them into the water, and went off to our work. It wasn't more than a week later when a group of soldiers came along commanded by the small-headed official with the large hat, shouting, "Arrest that man, and that one, and that one," until they'd taken off twenty of us, I among them. We spent a month in prison. Then one day the very soldiers who had put us there opened the prison gates. We asked them what it was all about but no one said anything. Outside the prison we found a great gathering of people; no sooner had we been spotted than there were shouts and cheering and we were embraced by some cleanly-dressed people, heavily scented and with gold watches gleaming on their wrists. They carried us off in a great procession, back to our own people. There we found an unbelievably immense gathering of people, carts, horses, and camels. We said to each other, "The din and flurry of the capital has caught up with us." They made us twenty men stand in a row and the people passed along it shaking us by the hand: the Prime Minister— the President of the Parliament—the President of the Senate— the member for such and such constituency—the member for such and such other constituency.

We looked at each other without understanding a thing of what was going on around us except that our arms were aching with all the handshakes we had been receiving from those Presidents and Members of Parliament.

Then they took us off in a great mass to the place where the doum tree and the tomb stand. The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the monument you've seen, and for the dome you've seen, and for the railing you've seen. Like a tornado blowing up for a while and then passing over, so that mighty host disappeared as suddenly as it had come without spending a night in the village no doubt because of the horseflies which, that particular year, were as large and fat and buzzed and whirred as much as during the year the preacher came to us.

One of those strangers who were occasionally cast upon us in the village later told us the story of all this fuss and bother.

"The people," he said, "hadn't been happy about this government since it had come to power, for they knew that it had got there by bribing a number of the Members of Parliament. They therefore bided their time and waited for the right opportunities to present themselves, while the opposition looked around for something to spark things off. When the doum tree incident occurred and they marched you all off and slung you into prison, the newspapers took this up and the leader of the government which had resigned made a fiery speech in Parliament in which he said:

"To such tyranny has this government come that it has begun to interfere in the beliefs of the people, in those holy things held most sacred by them." Then, taking a most imposing stance and in a voice choked with emotion, he said: "Ask our worthy Prime Minister about the doum tree of Wad Hamid. Ask him how it was that he permitted himself to send his troops and henchmen to desecrate that pure and holy place!"

"The people took up the cry and throughout the country their hearts responded to the incident of the doum tree as to nothing before. Perhaps the reason is that in every village in this country there is some monument like the doum tree of Wad Hamid which people see in their dreams. After a month of fuss and shouting and inflamed feelings, fifty members of the government were forced to withdraw their support, their constituencies having warned them that unless they did so they would wash their hands of them. And so the government fell, the first government returned to power and the leading paper in the country wrote: "The doum tree of Wad Hamid has become the symbol of the nation's awakening."

Since that day we have been unaware of the existence of the new government and not one of those great giants of men who visited us has put in an appearance; we thank God that Hehas spared us the trouble of having to shake them by the hand. Our life returned to what it had been: no water-pump, no agricultural scheme, no stopping-place for the steamer. But we kept our doum tree which casts its shadow over the southern bank in the afternoon and, in the morning, spreads its shadow over the fields and houses right up to the cemetery, with the river flowing below it like some sacred legendary snake. And our village has acquired a marble monument, an iron railing, and a dome with gilded crescents.

When the man had finished what he had to say he looked at me with an enigmatic smile playing at the corners of his mouth like the faint flickerings of a lamp.

"And when," I asked, "will they set up the water-pump, and put through the agricultural scheme and the stopping-place for the steamer?"

He lowered his head and paused before answering me, "When people go to sleep and don't see the doum tree in their dreams.

"And when will that be?" I said.

"I mentioned to you that my son is in the town studying at school," he replied. "It wasn't I who put him there; he ran away and went there on his own, and it is my hope that he will stay where he is and not return. When my son's son passes out of school and the number of young men with souls foreign to our own increases, then perhaps the water-pump will be set up and the agricultural scheme put into being - maybe then the steamer will stop at our village under the doum tree of Wad Hamid."

"And do you think," I said to him, "that the doum tree will one day be cut down?" He looked at me for a long while as though wishing to project, through his tired, misty eyes, something which he was incapable of doing by word.

"There will not be the least necessity for cutting down the doum tree. There is not the slightest reason for the tomb to be removed. What all these people have overlooked is that there's plenty of room for all these things: the doum tree, the tomb, the water-pump, and the steamer's stopping-place."

When he had been silent for a time he gave me a look which I don't know how to describe, though it stirred within me a feeling of sadness, sadness for some obscure thing which I was unable to define. Then he said: "Tomorrow, without doubt, you will be leaving us. When you arrive at your destination, think well of us and judge us not too harshly."

Teacher Readings: *Ethnicity*

Arab Women in the Field

(Soraya Altorki and Camillia Fawzi El-Solh, eds., *Arab Women in the Field*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988, pp.25-33, 38-43, 45. Reprinted by permission.)

Feminization, Familism, Self, and Politics - Research as a Mughtaribi (by Suad Joseph)

Growing up as an Arab-American has meant becoming a person of two worlds that have often been in conflict. Many are now "breaking the silence" to address a range of issues between the West and the Middle East. Among these, Arab-American women are beginning to investigate the nature and implications of their bicultural socialization. In this context, it feels special to have an opportunity to write, academically, about the experience of returning to the land of my birth to do research.

In 1968 I visited Lebanon on a YWCA exchange camp counselor program. I was the first of my family to return since our immigration to the U.S. in 1949. This first return to Lebanon was, on the surface, like that of many *mughtaribi* (those who have gone abroad). It was high romance. I fell in love with the country, the people, the culture.

However, there was a difference. A graduate student in anthropology at Columbia University, I was laying the groundwork for my doctoral research. I had come not only to be with the Lebanese, but also to study them. From the beginning, I was an insider/outsider. Without knowing it then, I was also a subject/object.

I had a deep sense of having returned to my home. So many things were familiar that after the first couple of months, I lost sight of them. Common events became less visible. I felt a sense of history. I learned about my parents' childhood and the early history of my family in Lebanon. I learned on a personal level the importance of identifying with family and village origins. At an emotional level, familiar feelings were stirred up: feelings of inclusion, of rightness, of morality, as well as sensibilities of politeness.

I felt an awakening of an old knowledge learned at an early age, but rarely applicable in the American context. It surfaced spontaneously around the rituals of kinship, speech, respect. I relished the deference I could give to uncles and aunts about whom I had heard so many stories. There was a pleasure in the certainty of roles.

These people were not alien to me. I knew their mentality, and their methods of reasoning had a familiar logicality. I was persuaded by their thinking on the basis of a rationality that was not directly accessible to my conscious rationality, but was nevertheless inside me. I found myself using the same rationality, even though I was not always able to articulate it in a way that was consonant with my Western-trained thinking.

Having been inundated with American society's stereotyping of Arabs, I found myself, particularly on my first return in 1968, filled with stirrings of an ethnic pride. Images imbued from school textbooks, the media, and conversations of ordinary and educated Americans contrasted with the scenic beauty, the political and social openness, the worldliness and the high culture I found in the Lebanon of the 1960s and 1970s. The sense of the region's civilization, negated in the West, was evident—as was the West's historic indebtedness to the Middle East.

I was particularly moved by the openness with which people expressed feelings. Raised in a family that felt things deeply, I often felt passion a bit out of place in the U.S. In Lebanon men and women expressed feelings and expected me to do the same. At a layer deeper than I understood, I was reclaiming something of myself. A part of me was finding its way home.

Conflicting Roles

As someone with roots in the society, my relationships with people and my identities were multifaceted. This both facilitated my work and made it more complex.

I was a member of a local family with relatives from both parents who expected me to be with them, carry out the host of familial obligations, and be a proper Lebanese woman. This conflicted with carrying out fieldwork, which required time, mobility, and occasional unconventional behavior...To my friends I was a scholar and a poet. They expected intellectual dialogue, mobility, and a cosmopolitan style of interaction...To the Palestinian and Lebanese progressive friends I was a political activist. They expected participation, political action in the camps, and other support activities. I was also a target of political organizing from some of the young men in Borj Hammoud. One tried to recruit me into the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and several made my apartment a place of ongoing political discussion. In the highly charged political atmosphere of Lebanon during the early 1970s, I found tension between the requirements of fieldwork and political activism. ..The scholarly community at the American University in Beirut regarded me as a graduate student fulfilling the requirements of a Ph.D. Treated as a scholar-in-training, I was an unknown who had yet to be proven...In the neighborhood, I was a friend, a daughter, a mother, a sister. To some I remained the suspected outsider. Minimally, I was a *mughtaribi*, a Lebanese who had returned home. This status gave me a certain legitimacy and access to people in the neighborhood.

It was understandable that I would want to return to Lebanon to learn about my own culture. I was a returning daughter of the land. I had a history. I had a right to the land and a right to be welcomed.

Sectarian Identities and Choices

The question of *identities* was central to me in the field, professionally and personally. I had gone to test the hypothesis that leaders in the social and political institutions were pressuring people to use their sectarian identities as political tools to gain access to services and resources. At a personal level, I had for years engaged in a struggle over religious, class, and ethnic/national identities, connected to my upbringing as an immigrant Arab-American.

Raised as a devout Catholic, I had begun to question the Church in my early teens and had left it by my early twenties. Of working-class origins, I was moving into the middle class by virtue of my education. Having been schooled in America in the 1950s when there was a strong sense of Americanizing the masses, particularly the immigrant masses, I had taken on, with some lack of clarity, an American identity. Coming from an apolitical to a conservative environment, I had been "radicalized" in the 1960s. All these transitions entailed transformations of identity.

In America these identities were optional. I could leave the Church and I was no longer a Catholic...In Lebanon, identities did not seem as optional. I was a Maronite, regardless of whether or not I practiced. I was a *mughtaribi*, a woman of local origin who had left and returned. I was from the suburb of Antilias from the Awwad family, from a working-class background. All of these categories gave me an *a priori* definition in the eyes of others apart from the meaning they held for me. Although I came to experience some of the comforts of the certainty this gave, I was thrown more deeply into professional and personal questioning over identity.

My questioning of identities probably sensitized me to the social construction of religious/ethnic categories and the situations in which choice-making is possible. However, because of my focus on demonstrating the institutional coercion in the use of identities, I initially did not take in, as much as I could have, the ways in which people enjoyed and felt comforted by prescriptive identities. Given my own rejection of religious faith, I did not see some of the connections between the sociopolitical and the personal. I saw identity, rather than faith, and considered it politically imposed. I was able to anticipate the rise in political tension around religious identities but saw it as externally created.

Crossing Class Boundaries

I transcended my social class origins during my fieldwork experience. My parents were of mixed rural and urban working-class background when they were in Lebanon and of small town working-class background in the U.S. Because of higher education, my siblings and I had moved into the middle class layers of American society. Returning to Lebanon, I found that both education and American citizenship were passports into the intelligentsia and middle- and upper-class Lebanese society. I became intimate with people with whom I would have had little in common had I stayed in Lebanon. Ironically, my experience with Arab Americans in New York had been that they determined class position in terms of social origin in Lebanon. To be welcomed into upper and middle-class circles in Lebanon was at times fascinating, at times confusing, at times painful, and at times ironically amusing.

I was probably more sensitive to social class differences because of my own class and cultural experience than someone for whom class was not a personal question. In particular, I was aware of inter-class interactions. Watching some of my working-class neighbors and my family interact with my middle- and upper-class friends brought up a range of emotions and observations. My more privileged friends graciously offered respect and hospitality, which was reciprocated with respect and deference. Highly ritualized, the rules of the interactions were well practiced. Knowing and identifying with both sets of friends intimately, I felt that I was on both sides of the interaction.

...Living in the Borj Hammoud neighborhood, I was caught between the neighbors' expectations that I be both like them and different from them. There was a delicate balance between the intimacy and the social distance that they seemed to want from me.

As an educated American woman, I was supposed to behave with a certain class decorum. They both approved and disapproved of the fact that I only partly did so. They thought of me as a *sha'biyyi* (an ordinary folk) or *bint al-jiran* (the neighbors' daughter). They liked the fact that it was easy for them to talk and be at ease with me. But at the same time, they wanted me to have some social distance from them. The women expressed this in terms of my attire and household. I was expected to dress much better than they. Although I thought my clothes were fine, I had a new wardrobe made to meet their standards. While my apartment was clean and orderly, it was not enough for my neighbors. One day, a few of them took matters in their own hands. Descending unannounced unto my apartment, they cleaned everything to their satisfaction.

Doing fieldwork in Lebanon raised the question of the difference in the Western and Middle Eastern [ideas] of personhood and self. I had internalized components of both cultures, although at the time of my first trip to Lebanon, I was, in my sense of self, probably more Middle Eastern than Western. By American middle-class standards, I probably did not have a well-developed sense of myself as an individual. In Lebanon, this was not a handicap, but rather an advantage. I experienced an embeddedness in the family and the social fabric to which I might not have had access had I had a clearer sense of self.

I experienced this sense of self in terms of what I now call a powerful desire to merge. I felt little sense of my own boundaries and seemed to dive into relationships with people. I wanted to be part of them. This was acted out, in part, in the expectations and willingness to share almost totally, materially and emotionally. The primary mechanism for sharing was the constant attention to the needs and desires of others, for which I had been well trained in my family, and acceptance of the constant involvement of others in matters of personal relevance.

Fieldwork brought up tensions between my scientific training in male-dominated Western academia and my socialization as a Middle Eastern woman. A part of me wanted to remain silent, to observe, to let things and people come to me, to merge, to weave myself into the social web. Another part thought is necessary to direct, to act, to shape, to make thinks happen...

Lebanon in the 1960s and 1970s was a relatively open society. I shared in the mobility of native women, although my status as a married woman and an insider/outsider probably added to my freedom. I came and went at all hours of the day and night with no difficulty. I had unlimited access to women, as would be expected. But I also had enormous access to men.

Most of my household interviews were with the family heads of households. But given my own enmeshment in family identity, which was enhanced in the field, I did not tend to see the women as separate individuals. Of course, neither did they. Seeing them as representatives of their households, I did not realize that I was recording a principally female experience. Thinking in household terms, I had devised my questionnaires in a manner to elicit information on the household as a unit. As I analyzed my data, I had to tease out of them information on men and women and reinterpret information solicited from a single person as if he of she spoke for the whole.

There were some ways in which my socialization as a Middle Eastern woman provided me with culturally specific methodological skills. As I was growing up, my mother constantly admonished me that I may have two eyes, but there were a thousand eyes looking at me. Given that I was raised as a Catholic, this was reinforced by the Church's teaching of the omnipresence of God. I was aware that I would be observed no matter what I did and where I did it. I was also aware that I was expected to be similarly observant, an early training that assisted me as a field-worker. It gave me a pointed insight into the sensitivities of Arab people.

I was not a feminist when I did my research in the early 1970s, at least not self-consciously. I thought that the sex of the researcher was primarily a matter of the kinds of access women would have versus men. Since I had unlimited access to women and vast access to men in Lebanon, the matter was not problematical. What I did not see was that my perspective and training were engendered. As I moved toward the study of women in the Middle East, I found that my personal experience was becoming extremely relevant...

Teacher Readings: *Gender*

In an Antique Land

(Amitov Ghosh, *In An Antique Land*, New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992, pp.126-133.)

The Caretaker of the house I had moved into in Nashawy was called Taha. He was a familiar figure around the village, and was known to everyone as Uncle; I never heard anyone address him without adding an 'Amm to his name. He was in his late fifties or thereabouts, excruciatingly thin, slack-mouthed because his lower jaw was not quite in line with the upper, and with one unmoving eye that looked away from the other at a sharp angle, in a fixed, unblinking glare.

Soon after I moved in, he and I reached an arrangement whereby he fetched me a meal from his house once a day: he did several different odd jobs and this was yet another in a long list. He usually came to my room at about midday with my meal, and one day, not long after I had missed Ustaz Sabry at his house, I told him about my abortive visit.

"Amm Taha was not surprised in the least. Of course he wasn't there," he said. "Ustaz Sabry is a busy man, and if you want to find him at his house you have to go at the right time. What time was it when you went?"

"A little before the sunset prayers," I told him.

"That's not the time to go," he said, with a mournful shake of his head. "At that time he usually goes to one of his friends' houses to watch TV or else he goes to visit people in the next village."

Startled as I was by the comprehensiveness of his information, I did not need to ask him how he knew; I had learnt already that very little happened in Nashawy without 'Amm Taha being aware of it. As a rule he collected his information in the evenings, when he went around from house to house to see if anyone had eggs or milk or anything else to sell. One of his many professions was that of vendor, and he regularly bought local products in Nashawy and took them elsewhere to sell. Eggs, milk and cheese were his staples, but he wasn't particular: he would just as willingly take a bunch of carrots, or a cauliflower that had escaped the pot the night before, or even a fattened chicken or a rabbit.

Every other day or so, he would gather his products together, load them on his donkey-cart, and drive down the dirt road to Damanhour or to one of the weekly markets in the nearby villages. The profits were meagre and they depended largely on the quality of his information...In other words 'Amm Taha's takings as a vendor hung upon his success in ferreting out some of the most jealously guarded of household secrets: in discovering exactly how matters stood behind the walls and talismans that guarded every house from the envy of neighbors and the Evil Eye. As it happened, 'Amm Taha was unusually successful in his profession because it was mostly women who were the guardians of those secrets, and many amongst them talked to him as they would not have to any other man—in large part, I think, because he did everything he could to let it be known that he was a poor, harmless old man, still childless despite many years of marriage, and too infirm to undertake the sort of exertion that results in procreation.

"Amm Taha keeps an eye on everything," people would say, "because one of his eyes looks to the left, while the other watches the right." 'Amm Taha did nothing to contradict this, nor did he discourage those who claimed to detect an element of the supernatural in his prescience.

Once, 'Amm Taha happened to be in my room when a hoopoe flew in through an open window. The sight of the bird seemed to work an instant transformation in him and he began to race around the room, slamming shut the doors and windows.

"Stop that," I shouted while the frightened bird flapped its wings against the walls, leaving a trail of droppings on my desk. "Stop, what are you doing, ya 'Amm Taha?"

'Amm Taha paid no attention; he was half in flight himself, leaping nimbly from the bed to my desk and back, with his hands hooked like talons and the sleeves of his jallabeyya flapping wildly, an albatross swooping on its prey. He knocked the bird to the floor with a wave of his jallabeyya, and after breaking its neck with an expert twist of his hands, he slipped it into his pocket, as matter-of-factly as though it were a ten piastre note.

I was astonished by this performance for I had often heard people say that hoopoes were 'friends of the fellaheen' and ought not to be harmed because they helped the crops by killing worms. He must have sensed my surprise for he explained hurriedly that it wasn't anything important, it was just that he particularly needed some hoopoe's blood that day.

"Hoopoe's blood?" I said. It was clear that he would rather have dropped the subject, but I decided to persist. "What will you do with it?"

"I need it for a spell," he said brusquely, "for women who can't bear children." One of the hoopoe's wings had somehow emerged from his pocket and its tip was hanging out now, like the end of a handkerchief. He tucked it back carefully, and then, after a moment of silence, he cast his eyes down, like a shy schoolgirl, and declared that he didn't mind telling me that he was a kind of witch, a sahir, and that he occasionally earned a bit of extra money by casting the odd spell.

It was a while before I could trust myself to speak, partly for fear of laughing, and partly because I knew better than to comment on the impressive range of his skills: I had discovered a while ago that he was very sensitive about what was said about the many little odd jobs he did to earn money—so much so that he had actually fallen ill a few days after we worked out our agreement.

It was the same woman who had led me to 'Amm Taha: one of his many jobs was that of caretaker. She had suggested that I pay a part of his wages and make an arrangement with him so that he could bring me food cooked by his wife—the kitchen attached to the guest-room was too small for daily use. The matter had been quickly settled and for the first few days after I moved in he arrived at midday, as we had agreed, bringing a few dishes of food with him. But then one afternoon he sent word that he wasn't well, and when he didn't turn up the next day either I decided to go and see what had happened.

His house was in the most crowded part of the village, near the square, where the dwellings were packed so close together that the ricks of straw piled on their roofs almost came together above the narrow, twisting lanes. It was a very small house, a couple of mud-walled rooms with a low, tunnel-like door. 'Amm Taha called out to me to enter when I knocked, but so little light penetrated into the house that it took a while before I could tell where he was.

He was lying on a mat, his thin, crooked face rigid with annoyance. and he began to complain the moment I stepped in: he was ill, too ill to go anywhere, he didn't know what was going to happen to all his eggs, he had to send his wife to the market because he hadn't been able to go out for two days.

"But what's happened, ya 'Amm Taha?" I asked. "Do you know what's wrong?"

His good eye glared angrily at me for a moment, and then he said: "What do you think has happened? It's the Evil Eye of course—somebody's envied me, what else?"

I looked slowly around the room at the ragged mats and the sooty cooking utensils lying in the corners.

"What did they envy?" I said.

"Can't you see?" he said irritably. "Everyone's envious of me nowadays. My neighbors see me going to the market every other day, and they say to themselves—that Taha, he has his business in eggs and then he sells milk too, sometimes, as well as vegetables; why, he even has a donkey-cart now, that Taha, and on top of all that, he has so many other little jobs, he's ever so busy all day long, running around making money. What's he going to do with it all? He doesn't even have any children, he doesn't need it."

He sat up straight and fixed his unmoving eye on me. "Their envy is burning them up," he said. "They're all well-off, but they can't bear to see me working hard and bettering my lot. Over the last few days they've seen me going off to your house, carrying food, and it was just too much for them. They couldn't bear it."

I began to feel uncomfortable with the part I had been assigned in this narrative: I was not sure whether I was being included amongst the guilty. "But ya 'Amm Taha," I said "isn't there anything you can do?"

He nodded impatiently; yes, of course, he said, he had already been to the government clinic that morning and they'd given him an injection and some tablets; and now a woman who lived a few doors away was going to come and break the spell—I could stay and watch if I wanted.

The woman arrived a short while later, a plump, talkative matron who seemed more disposed to chatter about the wickedness of their neighbors than to perform her duties. But 'Amm Taha was in a bad temper and he quickly cut her short and handed her a slip of paper, telling her to hurry up if she wanted her fee. She flashed me a smile, and then shutting her eyes she began to stroke his back with the slip of paper, murmuring softly. At times when her voice rose I thought I heard a few phrases of the Fatiha, the opening prayer of the Quran, but for the most part her lips moved soundlessly, without interruption.

After a few minutes of this she opened her eyes and declared plaintively: "You haven't yawned once, ya 'Amm Taha. You're fine, nobody's envied you."

This excited a squall of indignation from 'Amm Taha. "I haven't yawned, did you say?" he snapped. "How would you know, with your eyes shut?"

"I know you didn't yawn," she insisted. "And if you didn't yawn while I was reciting the spell, it means you haven't been envied."

"Oh is that so? Then look at this," said 'Amm Taha. Opening his mouth he leaned forward, and when his nose was a bare inch away from hers he produced a gigantic yawn.

She fell back, startled, and began to protest: "I don't know, ya 'Amm Taha, if you'd really been envied I'd be yawning too. And I haven't yawned at all—can you see me yawning?"

"You're not doing it properly," he said. "That's all. Now go on, yalla, try once more."

She shut her eyes and began to run the slip of paper over his back again, and this time within a few minutes they were both yawning mightily. Soon it was over, and she leant back against the wall, swelling with pride at her success, while 'Amm Taha began to pump his kerosene stove so he could brew us some tea.

"Do you know who it was who envied you?" I asked.

They exchanged a knowing glance, but neither of them would tell me who it was. "God is the Protector," 'Amm Taha said piously. "It doesn't matter who it was—the envy's been undone and I'm fine now."

The next morning, sure enough, he was back at work, collecting eggs and driving his cart to Damanhour.

Having known of 'Amm Taha's gifts for a while now, I was confident that he would be able to tell me exactly when Ustaz Sabry would be at home.

I was not disappointed.

"Go there this evening," he said. "An hour or so after the sunset prayers, and you can be sure you'll find him in."

Women's Voices from the Maghreb 1945 to the Present

(Evelyne Accad, extractions from a Dissertation titled: *Women's Voices from the Maghreb 1945* to the Present. Reprinted by permission.)

The historical development of the novel in North Africa

The first two novels which appeared were by two Algerian women writing in French: *Leila, Jeune Fille Algerienne* (1947), by Djamila Debèche, an Algerian from Setif; and *Jacinthe Noire* (1945), by Marguerite Taos-Amrouche, a Kabyle whose family had converted to Christianity. Women were not only the first to create a Francophone literature in North Africa, but their discussion of large social issues preceded by a number of years the male-dominated Algerian revolt.

The early appearance of these works is at least partly a result of the French colonial influence in North Africa. This forced contact with western culture created a strong bicultural stress in North African culture, helping to reduce the force of local tradition. Predictably, the stress was greatest at the upper levels of society, among the intelligentsia and the wealthy, who often became highly westernized through their contact with the French colonizers. Most of the female writers tended to come from these social classes. It is not surprising that writers such as Debèche and Taos are obsessed with problems of *biculturality* and lost cultural identity, and that their female characters face this problem in the literature.

In Taos novel, *La Rue des Tambourins* (1960), the central characters, who are primarily concerned with cultural alienation. Marie-Corail, the heroine, sees herself as being forever "on the fringe" of the culture around her, aware that "amid Muslim or French companions, I was the only one of my kind." Taos is not unaware of the problems women face in her culture; these matters are simply less important that what one critic has termed the "drama of disruption" which her characters experience by being at odds with their cultural milieu.

In her third novel, *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde* (1962), Djebar seems to attempt to combine personal and political freedom. The book describes a whole series of women who are involved in one way or another with the Algerian revolution. There is Chérifa, an uneducated lower class woman, who achieves a new and powerful sense of her own identity by going across town alone for the first time in her life to warn her husband of imminent danger; Lila, a highly educated and westernized woman who finally manages to break out of her bored, selfish existence by throwing herself into the revolutionary movement; Salima, a teacher who finds a similar sort of fulfillment; Hassiba, a teenage girl who joins the guerrillas; and finally Touma, a "loose" girl whose brother Tewfiq murders in order to clear the family "honor" so that he will be allowed to join the guerrilla movement—the "new order" of the revolutionaries is merely the old order of Muslim Algeria. This third novel was both a popular and critical success because it not only showed a powerful grasp of the social and historical reality of the times but also because it managed to depict women working out their individual salvation within the larger social context, rather than privately and egotistically.

Except for the lack of bicultural conflicts, Arabic fiction by North African women writers exhibits concerns similar to those expressed in Francophone fiction. The appearance of works in Arabic by women writers comes rather late.

When viewed by women writers, the plight of the Arab North African women often helps us explore several larger social issues, namely the problems of the solidarity of women and the complex inter-relation of women's liberation and Arab nationalism.

The fiction of Arabo-African women writers not only has a broad thematic and stylistic range, but it exhibits a multi-faceted definition of its subject matter.

Khannathah Bannunah, who is from Morocco and is the principal of a school in her native land, is concerned with national issues rather than personal ones. She writes philosophically, discussing questions of history, society, and the Arab people as a whole. She has published four collections of short stories: *Li-Yasqut al-Samt* (*Down with Silence*, 1965); *al-Narwa-al-Ikhtiyar* (*Fire and Choice*,]968); *al-Surah wa-al-Sawt* (*The Image and the Voice*, 1975); and *al-Asifah* (*The Storm*, 1979).

Her short stories often center around Arab national issues and self-determination of the Palestinian people. The main concern in her short stories revolves around one basic question: did our (the Arabs') escape to pre-history lead us to forget the realities of the tragedy of the Arab nation in Palestine?"...one critic refers to her work as "representative of a type of resistance literature unique in Arabic literature."

Like *Fire and Choice*, most of Bannunah's short stories are "nouvelles à thèse." As is usual in this genre, the plots are less important than the ideas which the author wants to communicate, and therefore the stories often take the form of inner monologues on various topics. While Bannunah is more concerned with general political and philosophical questions than with the condition of women, she sees nevertheless, that women have an important political and philosophical function to perform.

> *Will time pass, or will it not pass? Will a woman be able to be greater than her heart? Everywhere in the world, her own people have written about her: women in our society are without a cause! And what distortions they create! For there is the woman, the heart, the fire and the cause, the need, the choice, and the salvation.*

According to Bannunah then, women must dedicate their intellects and energies to the multiplicity of causes awaiting their efforts in the Arab world.

Zubaydah Bashir was born in Sakiet Sidi Yussef, Tunisia, in February 1938, and was raised in a traditional Arab home. At the age of fourteen she had already published her first poem...Bashir can be considered one of the first feminist Arab African woman writers. She openly rebels against the oppressive social conditions imposed on her and her friends. Her poems are strong and loud. She is not afraid to express her disillusionment over what stops women from ever reaching fulfillment.

> *I would like to go towards you;*
> *run away from my universe...but*
> *I cannot run away.*
> *I am a prisoner of a thousand chains;*
> *like a wall they obstruct my path.*
> *I have been crucified in the column of alienation*
> *to the fear of annihilation...*
> *Privation has consumed my heart.*

The inter-relationship of individual liberation and larger political goals is a concern of feminist literature everywhere in the world. In the literature under consideration here, however, the political issues are more complicated because at the same time that individual women are seeking liberation, the society as a whole is striving for political independence and groping for a national identity.

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